

'Al Nahdhah' in the making

AMMAN (J.T.) — An application for a new newspaper — "Al Nahdhah" — has been approved by the Ministry of Information. The founders of the newspaper include a number of Royal Court officials and university professors, among them Royal Court Chief Khalid Al Karaki. The editor of the newspaper will be Muhammad Daoudieh, who is now director of the information and public relations department at the Royal Court, but he is expected to resign his post to contest the next parliamentary elections in his hometown of Tafila. The other founders include Royal Court Director General Munir Durrah, Royal Court Adviser Ahmad Salameh, Al al-Bait University President Adnan Bakli and Ministry of Culture Director General Mohammad Amayreh. It was not immediately known whether the new publication will be a weekly or a daily. But according to information available, it will have a capital of JD 130,000 paid equally by the founders. The application is subject to further approval by the Council of Ministers, which is expected to be granted.

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Yemeni beheaded in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (AP) — A Yemeni was beheaded Friday for heroin smuggling as part of the Saudi Arabian effort to stem the narcotics trade. The Interior Ministry identified him as Hussein Ben Amir Al Kasiri and said he was executed in the southern city of Jizan on the border with Yemen. The kingdom rejects criticism of capital punishment by international human rights organisations, insisting that such executions are valid under Islam.

U.S. sending supplies to Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) — Health Minister Marwan Hamadeh and American Ambassador Ryan Crocker on Friday signed an agreement under which the United States will equip a 750-bed hospital for victims of Israel's recent blitz on Lebanon. An embassy statement said the \$11 million in equipment and medical supplies was "humanitarian assistance" from the U.S. Department of Defense. More than 147 people were killed, nearly 500 wounded and half a million displaced before a U.S.-brokered ceasefire ended Israel's week-long offensive against South Lebanon July 31.

Death sentence confirmed in Moroccan case

RABAT (R) — The Moroccan supreme court on Thursday confirmed the death sentence on chief police commissioner Mohammed Mustapha Taber, convicted on March 15 of multiple rape and other acts of sexual violence. Lawyers said the supreme court also confirmed jail sentences ranging from three years to life on 11 other police officers accused of being Taber's accomplices in organising orgies in a Casablanca flat.

7 sentenced to death in Algeria

ALGERIERS (R) — A special court in Algeria sentenced seven fugitive Muslim fundamentalists to death Thursday for attacking state security and belonging to a terrorist group. Algeria's official APS news agency said the court in the western city of Oran sentenced 25 other fundamentalists to prison terms ranging from two to 20 years. Five were acquitted. In the past 18 months at least 180 men have been sentenced to death for violence blamed on fundamentalists.

Confusion mounts over hostages

SANKARA (AFP) — Confusion mounted Friday over the fate of six western tourists held hostage by Kurdish rebels amid conflicting reports that two tourists had been released. Turkish Interior Minister Mehmet Gazioglu was reported as saying the rebels had released Friday two Western tourists whom they kidnapped last month. But shortly after the report was released by the semi-official Anatolia news agency the ministry denied it.

Hamas members stranded on border

AMMAN (R) — Seventeen members of the Islamic movement Hamas have been stranded on the Libyan-Egyptian border for the last few days because Libya has expelled them and Egypt has refused to take them in, Hamas officials said Friday. The 17 crossed the border from Egypt earlier this week on the understanding that Libya would let them stay but Libya has since gone back on its promise, they told Reuters in Amman. "They are now stranded somewhere near the border post of Saloum... we are surprised by the Libyan decision, especially after they agreed to take them," said Mohammad Nazzari, the Hamas representative in Jordan. The 17 are members of Hamas's military wing, known as the Izzideen Al Qassam Battalion, and they include some of the Islamic activists most wanted by Israel, Hamas said. They fled the Gaza Strip into Egypt to escape arrest at different times since December. But Egyptian security picked them up and held them in detention until Monday, Mr. Nazzari said. The group spent 36 hours in Libya but the Libyans then sent them back to Saloum for expulsion to Egypt.

Christopher ends mission on upbeat note

Increased focus seen on Syrian-Israeli track

Combined agency dispatches

DAMASCUS — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher ended a five-day swing of the Middle East Friday reporting progress in Arab-Israeli peace talks but warning there were still "many obstacles" on the road to peace.

His efforts to put the negotiations back on track were overshadowed by renewed violence on the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where three Israeli soldiers and a Palestinian were killed on Friday. And in southern Lebanon, where Mr. Christopher brokered a ceasefire on Saturday ending a seven-day Israeli onslaught, the Iranian-backed Hizbollah stepped up its anti-Israeli attacks (See stories below).

In Beirut, Lebanese Information Minister Michel Samaha said the Arab negotiating teams would meet in Beirut on Aug. 10 to assess the results of Mr. Christopher's tour.

Mr. Samaha said the meeting had been decided on during the Arab League ministerial conference last week in Damascus, which had focused on Israel's offensive in Lebanon.

In an effort to bridge the gaps between Israel and Syria, Mr. Christopher returned Friday to Damascus for the second meeting in three days with Syrian Presi-

dent Hafez Al Assad.

Emerging from the talks Mr. Christopher told reporters: "I am encouraged that the peace talks are back on track."

"I leave more encouraged than when I came to the region, however in the region as a whole, as well as in Syria, many problems, many obstacles remain."

He said he returned to Damascus to give Mr. Assad responses from Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to questions Mr. Assad had asked during their meeting here on Wednesday, but he would not give details.

Mr. Christopher headed home, by way of Italy. Asked at a news conference why he visited Damascus twice in two days, Mr. Christopher said, "I came back so that I can pass... some of the answers to the questions that Assad had raised, the answers given to me by Rabin."

"I was trying to play my intermediary role between Rabin and Assad," Mr. Christopher said.

"I also came back because there were some additional issues that I want to probe with" Mr. Assad, Mr. Christopher said. "There is some progress, and many difficulties."

Mr. Assad reiterated Syria's "strong desire to cooperate to make the peace process succeed," according to his spokes-

man Jibril Kuriyeh.

Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa also reported progress but noted that the Arab-Israeli conflict was a thorny issue.

The peace talks have bogged down over the issues of Palestinian self-rule and the Golan Heights.

Mr. Christopher began his mission on Monday, in Egypt, and visited Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. He also met Palestinian leaders in Arab Jerusalem.

The secretary of state said no date had been set for the next round of peace talks, involving Israel and Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

"The parties are looking forward (to) additional talks," he said. "The problem is finding a right set of dates and consulting with our co-sponsor, which is Russia."

In a radio call-in show broadcast to the Arab World, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres Thursday suggested Israel would make a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights if Syria agreed to a full peace.

He said the model should be a phased pullback similar to that Israel made from the Sinai, which culminated in a full withdrawal in April 1982.

"If the Syrians agreed to making a complete peace with diplomatic relations and opened

borders and commercial ties. I think the Israeli answer will be very positive," Mr. Peres said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Christopher stepped up pressure on the Palestinians during his earlier talks in Damascus for the Palestinians of achieving early agreement on interim self-government arrangements.

Saeb Erakat, a Palestinian negotiator, said that discussions with Mr. Christopher Thursday focused on whether the Palestinians could go directly to talks on a final status of the occupied territories. Dr. Erakat said this included the issue of Jerusalem and direct talks between Washington and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Following his meetings with the Palestinians, Mr. Christopher said:

"As you know, the United States has been hoping that the parties, that is, the Israelis and the Palestinians, would develop a declaration of principles relating to the interim self-government authority. A couple of weeks ago we gave the parties some ideas that the United States has for that. We've received today comments from the Palestinians with respect to the draft ideas that we'd given them."

"It's useful to have those. I

U.S. to look into Jordan's complaints over effect of sanctions against Iraq

Washington considers W. Bank and Gaza 'occupied,' wants Jerusalem status put off

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The United States has promised to look into Jordan's demands for offsetting the negative impact that the interdiction of Iraq-bound shipping by U.S.-led international forces enforcing the sanctions against Iraq is having on the country; and Jordanian officials are hoping for a "positive result" that observers see as a direct outcome of His Majesty King Hussein's visit to the U.S. in June.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, after talks with King Hussein and other officials Thursday, said the U.S. is concerned that the sanctions operate in a fair way towards Jordan and that the Clinton administration will be looking into that quite urgently.

The impact of the sanctions against Iraq on Jordan was among the major issues that were raised during Mr. Christopher's one-day visit to Jordan where he held talks with King Hussein, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al

Majali and other officials on the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations.

"I thanked His Majesty for the effective enforcement of (the sanctions) but also expressed concern that they operate in a fair and even way towards Jordan and indicated that we will be looking into that quite urgently," Mr. Christopher told a press conference after an hour-long meeting with King Hussein.

In a letter to the U.S. Congress in July, Mr. Christopher said Jordanian officials had given him assurances that the country was implementing the sanctions against Iraq and the U.S. "was taking these assurances seriously."

The secretary of state Friday ended a five-day Middle East shuttle saying he has put the Arab-Israeli negotiations back on track.

King Hussein said Mr. Christopher's visit provided an opportunity to discuss problems and concerns in regards "to achieving our objectives for conditions

which we seek for all in the region in the context of a just and durable peace."

Jordanian officials said Friday their meetings with Mr. Christopher mainly served as a forum "to exchange views" on the peace process and means of getting it back on track.

Mr. Christopher, who recently referred to the West Bank and Gaza as "disputed territories," told reporters that the U.S. still views the "territories as occupied territories."

Replying to a question on whether the U.S. had changed its position on the status of the West Bank and Gaza, Mr. Christopher said there is "absolutely no change.... (the West Bank and Gaza) are occupied territories."

He said that the status of Jerusalem should be left to negotiations on the final status of the occupied territories and the "parties should not take steps that (would) interfere with the final solution."

(Continued on page 10)

3 Israeli soldiers, Palestinian killed

Combined agency dispatches

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — A daylight raid left two Israeli soldiers and a Palestinian dead on the West Bank Friday after Palestinians kidnapped and killed a soldier, casting a pall over the latest Middle East peace mission.

Two armed Palestinians opened fire on a troop position near the Jewish settlement of Elqana, about 15 kilometres across the "Green Line" from Tel Aviv, an army spokesman said.

Two Israeli soldiers died, but a third ripped off one of the attackers and wounding the other who was captured. A third Palestinian waiting in a getaway car drove off.

The army imposed a curfew on the area and launched a massive manhunt.

On Thursday afternoon 20-year-old Yaron Chen, who served in a military intelligence unit, was kidnapped as he bled a lift home from the occupied West Bank.

His charred corpse was found overnight in the burnt-out wreck of a van he was last seen climbing into at a major road junction at Al Ram just north of Jerusalem.

Another soldier saw Chen, 20, hitchhiking on the main road from Ramallah to Jerusalem and a few minutes later saw him struggling with three abductors. The soldier chased the car and tried to stop it by firing in the air.

The killings came as U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher left occupied Jerusalem Friday for Damascus saying he now expected to see progress in the Middle East peace process, but there was no evidence of movement in blocked talks with the Palestinians.



Israeli soldiers Friday guard Palestinians rounded up after the killing of an Israeli soldier in a West Bank village near Ramallah (AFP photo)

When Muslim fundamentalists captured and killed a policeman last December Israel expelled 415 Palestinians leading to a four-month breakdown in the peace negotiations.

Israeli military radio said the killing bore the hallmarks of fundamentalist movements, but no one had claimed responsibility for the kidnapping.

Chief of Staff General Ehud Barak had warned Thursday to beware of Islamic Jihad, a hard-line armed group. "We know that the Islamic Jihad is going to carry out attacks and we are constantly on the alert," Gen. Barak said.

Islamic Jihad in Palestine called for suicide missions against Israelis to avenge the massive seven-day assault on Lebanon which ended on Saturday. The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for hijacking a U.N. bus in Gaza City on Monday which left one Israeli dead and six others injured.

Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur vowed to smash the Palestinian groups behind the latest attacks.

"There is a desire by extremists to sabotage the peace process and it is possible that some of the incidents are linked to the visit of the American secretary of state," Mr. Gur told Israeli Radio.

"But it is also possible there is an awakening of some groups surprised by the intensity and effect of our operation in Lebanon. It is clear to us we have to make every effort to overpower them as quickly as possible and that is what we intend to do," he said.

Israeli leaders called for a tough response, but one official said renewed violence should not be allowed to slow down the peace process.

"Much as we are dismayed by the incident, we won't let it cloud the positive results of the Christopher visit," said Uri Dromi, director of the government press office, a bureau in Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's office.

Islamic Jihad called a general strike Friday to mark the monthly anniversary of the start of the Palestinian uprising in December 1987.

Soldiers clamped an overnight curfew in the Ramallah area where the kidnapping occurred Thursday evening. They detained dozens of suspects in house-to-house searches, while helicopters hovered overhead, Israeli and Arab reports said.

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Crown Prince underlines need to modernise judiciary

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has underlined the importance of Jordan's regional role, which, he said, is based on democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the independence of its judicial system.

In an address at the graduation ceremony of the third batch of judges at the Jordan Judicial Institute on Wednesday, Prince Hassan called for the establishment of an ombudsman body of Jordan.

"The term ombudsman is Islamic in origin and means the body having authority to inquire into and pronounce upon grievances of citizens against public authorities," he said.

The Crown Prince stressed the importance of establishing special judicial inspection departments to improve judicial performance in Jordan and speed up work of trials in court.

The Crown Prince also proposed the creation of an independent committee to inspect court works and judicial matters and to prepare an annual report to be referred to His Majesty King Hussein since he is the supreme leader of all authorities in the Kingdom.

The judiciary in Jordan, Prince Hassan said, has always enjoyed the care of King Hussein and will always be so since the Jordanian leadership has deep faith in the supremacy of law.

The Prince called for recording court cases in Jordan and to document them in a specialised judicial journal to be a reference for judges in the future.

He also emphasised the importance of self-censorship in the judicial system out of the powers granted to it.

He dwelt on the immigration of 50,000 Jews from Central Asia to Palestine and the eviction of Palestinians from their homeland, and questioned the legal grounds for this and shed doubts over Israel's respect for human rights.

At the end of the graduation ceremony, Prince Hassan distributed certificates to the graduating judges, who numbered 17 and of whom several are from Oman. Later, Prince Hassan met with several judges in the presence of Minister of Justice Rateb Al Wazant and exchanged with them

Abdul Shafi calls for 'national dialogue' among Palestinians

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi, head of the Palestinian team negotiating with Israel, Friday called for a "national dialogue" to discuss the future of Middle East peace talks.

Dr. Abdul Shafi, who boycotted this week's meetings with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, said Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat should broaden the decision-making process to include hardline factions and independents.

"We need to reach for a broad consensus on the basic and crucial issues. The leadership must reflect the mood of the people. It must test and research it," Dr. Abdul Shafi said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Dr. Abdul Shafi, a physician from Gaza, repeated his call for democratic reform that would force Mr. Arafat to share power with other Palestinians.

"Collective leadership means that Palestinian faction leaders and influential independent personalities must participate in the decision-making process within the PLO," he said.

Other Palestinian leaders have opposed the so-called national dialogue, saying it would slow down the peace process.

Dr. Abdul Shafi was critical of the Christopher mission for failing to break the impasse over key issues such as the future of Jerusalem and Palestinian demands for sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The Americans brought us no new positions. Their intervention did not help," he said. "I have no clear reason for optimism."

Dr. Abdul Shafi's deputy in the negotiating team, delivered a scathing attack on U.S. policy in the Middle East as Mr. Christopher left the region Friday.

"It has become very difficult if not impossible to differentiate between American and Israeli positions on the issue of Jerusalem... violation of human rights and the issue of settlements," said Saeb Erakat, deputy head of the Palestinian delegation to the bilateral peace talks.

"Christopher judges Arab proposals according to how far Israel would accept or approve such proposals," he wrote in an article for Palestine Press Service.

Evidence of "biased American policy" can be found also on the Syrian-Israeli track of the bilateral talks, according to Dr. Erakat.

"Israel seeks to divide the principle of land for peace, talking only about the nature of peace regardless of any commitment to



Haidar Abdul Shafi withdrawal from Syrian territory," he said, saying Mr. Christopher had adopted the same line. "No peace will be achieved by such an unfair attitude," he warned.

"It is nonsense that Christopher comes to the region and leaves without declaring the necessity of an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories... without exerting pressure on Israel to comply with the principle of land for peace, or the recognition of east Jerusalem as occupied territory."

"These principles have been adopted by the American administration since 1967, but are not declared nowadays," he noted.

Dr. Erakat was in the delegation on Thursday handed Mr. Christopher a document of principles in a second meeting this week with the secretary.

The session, scheduled for an hour, lasted only about 20 minutes. The Americans said they would study the secret paper, which came in answer to a U.S. document.

The Palestinians rejected the U.S. draft because it suggests setting aside the question of East Jerusalem for several years in line with Israeli wishes.

Israel refuses to consider the status of what it claims as its "united capital" at least until the third year of autonomy, when discussions on a final settlement are set to begin.

In Cairo, a senior PLO official said the United States has so far failed to pressure Israel enough to reactivate the peace talks.

"The United States is not making enough effort to pressure Israel into fully committing itself to the peace process," Farouk Kaddoumi, the PLO's political apartment head, said.

"The Israeli assault on South Lebanon proves that Israel does not want peace and does not want to make any progress," he said, preferring to the seven-day Israeli blitz.

Hizbollah steps up attacks on 'security zone'

Combined agency dispatches

TYRE, Lebanon — Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas Friday said they launched three attacks against Israeli-occupied South Lebanon amid warnings of a severe Israeli riposte.

The attacks on Israel's self-declared "security zone" came less than a day after guerrillas fired Katyusha rockets at the zone for the first time since a massive Israeli blitz ended Saturday in a ceasefire.

Security services here said the guerrillas fired automatic weapons and anti-tank rockets in two simultaneous attacks in the Jisr Al Hamra area, held by Israeli troops and their proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

Following Friday's attacks, SLA radio warned that "the riposte will be very violent if these operations continue."

In occupied Jerusalem, Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur told military radio after Thursday night's rocketing that: "If the Hizbollah continues we will use all the means of our disposal and they have felt the full force."

No group claimed responsibility for the rocket attack.

Israel called off a massive seven-day assault on Hizbollah and Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon last Saturday saying an "understanding" had been reached with Syria and Lebanon that Jewish settlements bordering Lebanon would no longer be targeted.

But Mr. Gur noted that the rocketing Thursday did not violate the ceasefire.

Israel "makes a clear difference between attacks on the security zone and attacks on Israeli territory," he said.

crashed into the zone Thursday night for the first time since the ceasefire came into effect last Saturday evening. Mortars also hit Israeli targets in the zone and the army and militia forces fired shells back.

The recent attacks bring the seven the number carried out against positions in the "security zone" since Saturday's ceasefire.

The attacks drew retaliatory Israeli fire on villages in South Lebanon, security sources said.

There was no immediate report of casualties from the exchanges along the western sector of the zone on the last day of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's Middle East tour.

The Israelis and SLA militiamen responded with tank fire on the villages of Mansoura and Izziye, which are policed by U.N. peacekeeping troops from Fiji.

The hostilities forced closure of the Hamra crossing, used mostly

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(Continued on page 10)

Carter criticises U.N. in Somalia

NAIROBI (R) — Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter urged the United Nations Friday to get its humanitarian operations back on track in Somalia, where its military forces have become embroiled in a guerrilla war.

"I hope that the U.N. will continue its efforts to provide humanitarian relief instead of trying to rely on military efforts and the capture of General Mohammed Farah Aideded of which I do not approve," Mr. Carter told reporters in Nairobi.

Mr. Carter said he did not want to usurp the role of the U.N. His criticism followed an outcry by human rights groups and disgruntled U.N. staff against what they see as an operation that has lost sight of its mission to help a nation destroyed by famine and anarchy.

The U.N. is offering a reward for the arrest of warlord Aideded for his alleged role in the massacre of 24 Pakistani U.N. troops in early June.

The U.N. has killed at least 120 Somalis and lost several more of its own troops since the killings of the Pakistani. Four journalists were also murdered by angry Somalis after a U.N. helicopter attack in Mogadishu on July 12.

Some critics of the U.N. operation, which they say is no longer a neutral force in the conflict, have suggested that an independent body such as a human rights group investigate and mediate in the dispute between Gen. Aideded and the U.N.

Mr. Carter, who has mediated in the Sudan and former Ethiopian civil wars, did not specifically offer his services for Somalia but said he could play a role in solving the region's conflicts.

"We have always maintained an interest in conflict resolution in Africa, and if the Carter Cen-



An American soldier carries some of the weapons seized by Malaysian U.N. soldiers (background) in the quarters of the humanitarian Irish aid organisation in Mogadishu Thursday. The troops found the cache conducting a sweep in south Mogadishu (AFP photo).

tre could play a role in conflict resolution here then we would be happy to do so," he said.

Mr. Carter met Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, who has also mediated between warring parties in the region, to discuss Somalia and the war in neighbouring Sudan earlier this week before going on safari with his wife.

"I met with him to hear his opinion of what could be done in Somalia and because of his relationship with Sudan, I wanted to discuss what could be done there to work for peace," Mr. Carter said.

This was Mr. Carter also met rebel Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army leader John Garang

and Riak Machar, who leads a rebel splinter group fighting both the Khartoum government and Colonel Garang.

Mr. Carter flew to Uganda's capital Kampala to promote his programme to eradicate guinea worm, a parasite that affects many African countries. On Saturday he will fly to Khartoum for talks with Sudanese military leader Omar Hassan Al Bashir.

"It's my intention to promote a cessation of the conflict currently going on in southern Sudan and to promote humanitarian relief activities — to that end I will be taking messages to Khartoum from the John Garang group," Mr. Carter said.

Cairo to open largest case against militants

CAIRO (AP) — An Egyptian military court will start the trial Monday of the first group of defendants in the government's biggest case against extremists, involving 756 people.

The defendants are charged with belonging to an illegal group called "the Vanguard of Islam," a revival of the Jihad organisation that assassinated President Anwar Sadat in 1981, a military source said Friday.

The trial of the first 53 defendants will be held at Cairo's Red Mountain military barracks where the 22 militants who were convicted of Sadat's assassination were tried. Five of them were executed.

All those going on trial are accused in the militant 19-month campaign to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's secular government and replace it with strict Islamic rule.

The case of the 756 is divided into two sets of charges, said the military source, who spoke on to the AP condition of anonymity. The first involves 234 people who are accused of committing crimes in the Cairo area.

The remaining 522 are charged with belonging to Vanguard of Islam provincial branches and plotting to carry out car bombs and assassinations.

The 53 going on trial Monday face charges in Cairo. They are accused of killing a truck driver and stealing his van; slaying two police and an embassy guard to steal weapons, illegal possession of arms and falsifying documents. Six of the defendants are at large.

Mr. Mubarak started referring extremist cases to military courts earlier this year to ensure quicker verdicts. In civilian courts, cases often drag on for years.

The military courts have sentenced 22 militants to death, and 14 have been hanged. Another extremist with a death sentence from a civilian court also was executed.

Human rights organisations have criticised Mr. Mubarak's decision to refer radicals to military court, which allow no appeal except for presidential clemency.

More than 190 people have been killed in the radicals' campaign of violence or in confrontations between the extremists and authorities.

The militants' main targets have been Christians, police and government officials. Last year they started attacking foreign tourists. More recently, authorities blamed them for a series of nail-packed bombs in public places that killed and wounded many ordinary people.

The 248 militants were arrested in May in a sweep in the greater Cairo area. Qalyoubiya province and Alexandria.

The military prosecution has divided them into five groups to be tried in separate military courts.

Pharmacist killed

Suspected extremists shot and killed a Coptic Christian pharmacist in southern Egypt.

Philip Al Kummus, 36, died instantly from a gunshot to the head Thursday in the village of Dairut Al Sherif near the town of Dairut, police said.

Police are still investigating the motive of the killing. They have set up checkpoints in the village looking for the assailants.

Militants have killed Christian pharmacists for selling contraceptives, which are considered offensive to some Muslims. Other victims have been accused of collaborating with authorities or killed out of sectarian hatred.

Christian Copts account for 6 million of Egypt's 58 million population, which is largely Muslim. In May 1992, militants killed 13 Christians in a dispute over property ownership.



TRAINING: Palestinian fighters learn to handle a Katyusha rocket in a training camp in southern Lebanon (AFP photo).

Lebanese billionaire and independence hero found killed

BEIRUT (AP) — Billionaire Henry Pharaoun, a Lebanese independence hero who once owned the world's biggest racing stable of Arabian horses, was found stabbed to death Friday in his hotel room bed, police said. He was 92.

The body of his driver and bodyguard, Youssef Sourou, 45, was found near the bed, also with stab wounds so severe that police at first reported both bodies had been riddled with bullets.

Police said they had no clue as to the motive.

A Greek Catholic who had a passion for horses and once boasted he owned more Arabian horses than anyone, Pharaoun had lived for the last 18 months at the seaside Carlton Hotel. He moved there after his only son, Najj, sold Pharaoun's famous palace to a Saudi Arabian prince.

Pharaoun's stables contained more than 300 racing Arabian horses in the 1950s and 1960s.

He was one of a group of Christian and Muslim politicians who struggled to make Lebanon independent from France in 1943. He designed Lebanon's red and white flag, with a green cedar in the centre, and served as foreign minister and in other cabinet posts in the fledgling country.

Pharaoun was one of the most respected champions of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims, and took no sides during the 1975-1990 civil war.

His international reputation derived mainly from the antiquities, art objects and wonders of Oriental architecture he amassed at his two-storey palace on the green line that split Beirut during the war.

Among his possessions was one of the five letters allegedly written by the Prophet Mohammad on deer skin.

Pharaoun lived in solitude in the palace despite frequent bombardment during the war. He moved to the Carlton after the house was sold in 1991, and its contents put into a museum.

Although he had quit politics long ago, Pharaoun remained head of Lebanon's Committee for Preserving the Arabian Horse and chairman of the Beirut race track.

He tried to restart the races during the war, saying, "I want to see them running again before I die."

His dream came true in January 1990. Although he had a broken hip, Pharaoun was driven to the racetrack, where other members of the governing committee helped him climb the stairs to a reviewing stand where he presided over the reopening of the races.

"The track and the port are the main bastions of peaceful coexistence that ensures Lebanon's survival," Pharaoun said at that ceremony, his last public speech on the occasion. When crowds burst into cheers and chants for his long

life, Pharaoun wept and could not continue his speech.

Pharaoun headed the port authority for 30 years. It is now run by the government.

Pharaoun married Nawali Kasar, heiress of a wealthy Palestinian family from Jaffa, in 1922, when then he was the tennis champion of Lebanon. She died before the civil war broke out. They had one child.

The gray stone Pharaoun palace resembled a Gothic castle with a hodgepodge of Greek, Roman and other statues and sarcophagi in the walled garden. Inside, it was a treasure trove of art that Pharaoun had collected from palaces and mansions of bygone Arab and near eastern potentates.

Some of the ground-floor rooms were fitted with 15th century Damascus ceilings, made of carved and painted wood, embellished with gold leaf.

One room was paneled in authentic delft blue and white ceramic tiles. Carved and inlaid wooden furniture more than a century old lined the walls. Antique carpets cushioned the floor.

Pharaoun was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1901. His family moved in 1905 to Beirut, where Pharaoun was educated in French missionary schools. He went to college in Switzerland and received his law degree at France's Lyon University. He founded one of Beirut's oldest banks, Bank Pharaoun and Shiba.

Abbas Hamadi released from jail, flies home

FRANKFURT (Agencies) — Lebanese jailed for kidnapping left Frankfurt airport for his native Lebanon Friday after serving half of a 13-year prison sentence in Germany, airport officials said.

Ali Abbas Hamadi, imprisoned for his role in kidnapping two German businessmen, left for Beirut on a scheduled Middle East Airlines flight at 3.00 p.m. (1300 GMT), after his release from jail in nearby Saarbrücken.

Abbas Hamadi was brought to Frankfurt amid tight security and was escorted onto the plane by two German guards. He did not glance back at watching journalists.

He was jailed for the kidnapping of Rudolf Cordes and Alfred Schmidt in a failed bid to free his younger brother Mohammad Ali Hamadi, held in Germany for the 1985 hijacking of a U.S. airliner to Beirut in which a U.S. navy diver was killed.

Businessmen were eventually freed unharmed.

Justice officials have said there are no plans to release Mohammad Ali, jailed for life in 1989, who would have to serve at least 15 years in prison before becoming eligible for early release under German law.

German authorities announced in April that Abbas Hamadi would be released in August, having served half his sentence, because he became eligible for remission.

However, the authorities demanded as an essential condition that he renounce his German nationality, acquired through marriage, so that he could be expelled as an undesirable alien after his early release.

Mohammad Hamadi remains in prison at Schwalmstadt, near Frankfurt.

The fate of the brothers was long linked to that of the last two German hostages held in Lebanon, Thomas Kempfner and Heinrich Striebig, whose kidnappers had demanded an exchange of prisoners. The hostages were finally released in June 1992 following pressure from Iran.

German authorities said there had been no trade-off involved in the release of Mr. Kempfner and Mr. Striebig.

On Thursday the father of Abbas Hamadi, interviewed in Sawwane, in South Lebanon, thanked the German government for his son's release.

U.S. government asks court to close Demjanjuk case

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The U.S. Justice Department Thursday urged a federal appeals court to close the case against accused Nazi guard John Demjanjuk and abide by the ruling that stripped him of his U.S. citizenship.

In a brief filed with the appeals court in Cincinnati, the department said the court should leave undisturbed previous rulings in which the 73-year-old retired Cleveland car worker was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1981 and ordered deported in 1986.

While Justice Department lawyers acknowledged that doubt has been cast on whether Demjanjuk was a guard at the Treblinka camp, they said sufficient evidence exists that he served at a Nazi training centre and another concentration camp in Poland.

The Cincinnati tribunal — officially called as the Sixth U.S. Circuit of Court of Appeals — has jurisdiction over federal appeal cases in Ohio, including Cleveland where Demjanjuk lived.

The same U.S. appeals court ruled on Tuesday that Demjanjuk must be permitted to return to the United States from Israel, where he has been held since 1986, while it considers the case. The Israeli supreme court last week cleared Demjanjuk of being a guard who operated the gas chambers at Treblinka.

The Justice Department has not yet decided whether to appeal Tuesday's decision by the U.S. appeals court. If the government appeals as expected, the Justice Department would have to file a separate motion arguing Demjanjuk should not be allowed to

re-enter the country. The brief filed on Thursday, responding to a ruling in June by a judge, also urged the court to accept the finding that U.S. prosecutors did not deliberately conceal evidence that would have cleared Demjanjuk.

"As the special master (Judge) recommended, it is now time to close the case," department lawyer Patty Merkamp Stiemler said in the 62-page brief. "In sum, Demjanjuk has had an opportunity to raise every conceivable objection to the judgments against him. Each argument has been rejected."

Despite last week's ruling by Israel's highest court, Demjanjuk remains in Israel, barred from going to the United States or his native Ukraine.

An Israeli supreme court panel has set a hearing for Aug. 11 on whether he might stand trial again in that country based on evidence he was a guard at Nazi camps other than Treblinka.

Born Ivan Demjanjuk, he has insisted that he never was a guard at any Nazi camp and has been a victim of mistaken identity.

The appeals court in Cincinnati has set its next hearing in the case for Sept. 3.

Eight Nazi camp survivors asked the Israeli supreme court Thursday to try Demjanjuk on new charges and claimed his freedom would signal forgiveness to Nazi war criminals everywhere.

"I have an obligation to the people who were destroyed. I remember before they went to the gas chamber, they shouted, 'Lord of Israel, tell the world what they are doing here and take revenge,'" said Dow Fraiberg.



John Demjanjuk

Mr. Fraiberg and the seven others were at the Sobibor camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. They did not identify Demjanjuk as a Sobibor guard, but noted that the Israeli high court had found evidence he was there as part of a unit of Ukrainian collaborators.

The Sobibor charges were not contained in the original indictment, and the judges recommended against opening a new trial against the retired autoworker.

Letting Demjanjuk go would mean "granting pardon and forgiveness to Nazi war criminals around the world," said the appeal, which was joined by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, a Los Angeles-based Nazi hunting group.

The Israeli high court accepted the survivors' petition and combined it with two appeals filed last week. The appeal has delayed Demjanjuk's deportation from Israel, which had been scheduled for last Sunday, to give the attorney general time to consider a new trial.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
18:00 Les Aventures de l'Espace
18:30 Envoyé Spécial
19:00 News in French
19:15 Panorama sur
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Wacky World
21:00 Perspectives
21:30 Varieties
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature Film: "Carolina Skeltons"

PRAYER TIMES

06:23 Fajr
05:49 (Sunrise) Doha
12:41 Dhahr
16:22 'Asr
19:33 Maghreb
21:00 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetfith, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622566

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 711331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 715261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assiout International Church Tel. 625226
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 623804, 654922
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675591.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Normal summer weather will prevail and winds will be northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 23 / 32
Aqaba 25 / 40
Desert 20 / 37
Jordan Valley 23 / 38
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 32, Aqaba 41, Humidity readings: Amman 24 per cent, Aqaba 24 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mahmoud Hindi 898787
Dr. Fayed Al Dabbas 799155
Dr. Jamal Jilwa 746351
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleli 827195
First pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Al Salan pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmiciani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

ZARQA:
Dr. Mazen Shairari 248056
Al Quds Pharmacy (—)
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 606800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information
(directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repair 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power
Company 636381
RJ Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/2
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Alkhat Maternity, J. Amn 64441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmiciani 664171/4
Shmiciani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musafir Hospital 607227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Abli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/28
Afay, Marja 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 622403/50
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)98332
Zarqa National Hospital (09)90560
Jal Sira Hospital (09)986722
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)99970

IBRD:
Princess Batma Hospital (02)275585
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)27275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information Department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:30 Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
06:45 New Delhi (RJ)
06:55 Dhahran (RJ)
07:05 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)

16:30 Cairo, Aqaba (RJ)
16:45 Beirut (RJ)
17:00 Colombo (RJ)
17:15 Abu Dhabi, Doha (RJ)
17:30 Cairo (RJ)
17:45 Istanbul (RJ)
18:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:15 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
18:30 London, Berlin (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
11:30 Sanaa (YV)
19:25 Rome (AZ)
20:35 Istanbul (RJ)
21:45 Dubai, Damascus (EM)
21:45 Larnaca (CY)
21:45 Paris, Damascus (AF)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
07:00 Beirut (RJ)
12:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:45 Istanbul (RJ)
12:50 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
13:05 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
13:25 London (RJ)
13:45 Jeddah (RJ)
14:05 Damascus (RJ)
14:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
14:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
07:05 Larnaca (CY)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in Bds per kg.
Apples 280/300
Apricots 440/280
Banana 600 / 600
Banana (Mukannsar) 620 / 630
Beans 520 / 530
Carrots 100 / 130
Cauliflower 280/285
Cherry (red) 750/800
Cucumbers (large) 100 / 90
Cucumbers (small) 170 / 120
Eggplant 170 / 130
Garlic 300/200
Grapes 700 / 50
Lemon 500 / 280
Marrow (large) 150 / 100
Marrow (small) 250 / 200
Mint 50 / 50
Okra 60/60
Onion (dry) 140 / 70
Oranges 340/200
Peaches 300/300
Pepper (hard) 360 / 380
Pepper (sweet) 220 / 200
Potato 130/130
Tomato 200/180
Sweetmelon 140/140
Watermelon 140/140

Jordan to mark King's accession to throne

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will mark a public holiday next Wednesday in observance of the anniversary of His Majesty King Hussein's accession to the throne. On the occasion, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali Friday issued a communique ordering the closure of all ministries, government departments and institutions. In a related development, the Great Arab Revolt Club Friday announced that it was hosting a series of events to mark the occasion. Sources at the club said it will be hosting officials who served during the early years of the King's reign to talk about development witnessed in Jordan under his leadership. The club will also organise special programmes aimed at serving the local community. These programmes include offering medical services free of charge for residents of remote areas in the Kingdom. President of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research Nassereddin Al Assad will Saturday deliver a lecture on higher education in Jordan at the club as part of these programmes.



Competition narrows to between 4 international firms for contract to study RJ privatisation strategy

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A government-appointed technical committee has opened negotiations with four international consultancy companies on awarding a contract to study the best strategy and mechanism to privatise Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national air carrier.

"The field has been narrowed to four from the eight companies which had submitted offers," said an informed source. "The technical committee is negotiating the contract with the four and a decision could be expected in the next 10 days," the source told the Jordan Times.

"The objective of the proposed study is to come up with the best strategy and mechanism to privatise RJ," said the source, who preferred anonymity.

According to the source, the contract value is in the range of \$250,000 to \$500,000. The source refused to give further details.

Among the companies which had submitted offers were: Price Waterhouse, Arthur Anderson and Company, KPMG Peat Marwick, Ernst & Young, Touche Ross and Company and Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte.

The offers were submitted early this year and earlier expectations that a decision was imminent in February did not materialise.



This December Royal Jordanian celebrates 30 years of operation as the Hashemite Kingdom's national carrier (file photo)

The source declined to identify the four whose offers are under consideration.

Arthur Anderson & Company conducted a study on RJ affairs last year and recommended that

the airline's capital be raised to \$100 million from the present JD 22 million (about \$33 million).

The technical committee is part of a larger, high-level committee chaired by the minister of transport which was set up last year to

study the situation of the airline and come up with the best means to privatise it.

RJ's operational side is registering good profits, but the airline is burdened with over \$300 million in local and foreign debts.

taxing it up to \$40 million in year in debt servicing.

The first phase of the privatisation process, according to the recommendations by auditors Arthur Anderson & Company, will be the transfer of part ownership to Jordanian government agencies and institutions such as the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, the Social Security Corporation and the Housing Bank. These institutions are estimated to hold about 40 per cent of the airline's debts.

The second phase will be implemented with shares offered to the private sector — both local and foreign — but the government will ensure that the controlling interest will remain with Jordanian institutions by limiting the shares on offer to foreign interests in 49 per cent, according to the sources.

Another senior source said: "It is no longer an issue whether to privatise RJ; it is a question of how best to do it."

The source categorically rejected reports that several international airlines were in touch with RJ with a view to acquiring RJ shares.

"We have yet to take the first step towards privatising RJ," noted the source. "We do not even know the shape of the company. All talks about other airlines conducting negotiations on RJ shares are unfounded."

Majali says efforts to modernise foreign ministry will be fully supported

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting upon directives of His Majesty King Hussein, the government will extend all possible support to the Foreign Ministry in its drive to modernise and raise the standards and skills of its staff, said Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali Thursday.

Addressing a meeting held at the foreign ministry to review new plans for modernisation, the prime minister said he understood all the ministry's requirements in this respect and backs its efforts to recruit qualified staff and establish a Jordanian diplomatic institute to train new foreign service personnel.

Dr. Majali was commenting on a general plan presented at the meeting by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan entailing modernisation and the ministry's efforts to develop international relations.

The premier outlined Jordan's



Abdul Salam Al Majali foreign policy, stressing the main issues of concern to the Kingdom, especially the Middle East peace process and the country's drive to extend support to the Palestinian people in regaining their legitimate rights.

Government to join efforts in preventing forest fires

AMMAN (Petra) — The Interior Ministry is coordinating with other government departments, particularly the Agriculture Ministry, to protect wooded regions and stem the rising number of fires reported in different parts of the country according to Interior Minister Salameh Hamad.

Most of the fires result from negligence on the part of vacationers and there is need for an integrated plan to deal with this problem said the minister Thursday during an inspection visit to the Civil Defence Department (CDD).

In praising the efforts of the CDD forces, the minister said he would back all their efforts to acquire modern fire-fighting equipment and highly skilled staff to carry out various duties.

Mr. Hamad also voiced his support for the idea of creating a special academy to train recruits

in civil defence work including fire fighting.

Because of the variety of CDD responsibility there is need for an amendment to the CDD law so that it can promote its work and offer better services to the public, suggested Mr. Hamad.

He said the CDD headquarters should develop its administrative system and acquire a computer system that would help it coordinate its work with the public and private sectors and provide speedy service.

The minister listened to a briefing presented by CDD Director Afif Al Ghoul who spoke of a plan to promote the civil defence apparatus to handle any emergency.

Lieutenant General Ghoul also said the CDD was planning to transform the CDD centre at Sahab Industrial City into an academy, adding that this would cost at least JD 16 million.



Sons, a popular summertime beverage made from the liquorice root, is served from a traditional jug in downtown Amman (file photo)

Ministry moves closer to forming national health insurance plan

By Kathrine Rath

Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — After several aborted attempts to provide Jordan with a comprehensive health insurance scheme, a national insurance plan is now closer to being formulated at the Ministry of Health.

Health Minister Abdul Rahim Malhas, in a recent interview with the Jordan Times outlined the basic principles of the plan and said that the aim is to create a structure which, through membership, links the people in need of a health service with the people and institutions able to provide this service. He also said that it is important to develop a scheme which can be made easily available to the public and "which can provide people with the service in a comfortable manner."

Dr. Malhas said the scheme will be open to "anybody, Jordanian or non-Jordanian, or any group, Jordanian or non-Jordanian, who would like to buy all or part of the medical service given by the health care provider... under conditions previously agreed upon by the (scheme's) administration."

Thus, one does not need to hold Jordanian nationality to join the scheme, Jordanians abroad, foreigners in Jordan and even tourists visiting the country for a short period will be eligible for membership.

According to Dr. Malhas, the ultimate goal of the national insurance plan is to embrace all groups including the unemployed, housewives and children. But the scheme is still in its early phase of preparation and many questions, such as how the poor and jobless would fit into the plan and exactly how the plan would be funded, remain unanswered. A full understanding concerning the vision, the terminology and the implementation of the plan has yet to be established, the minister told the Jordan Times.

Dr. Malhas feels that previous attempts at working out such a plan failed mainly because they sought to include too much from the start and were therefore found to be very costly. He said that "the problem is now being approached from the other end"



Basic services under the planned national health insurance scheme is expected to include obstetrical care (file photo)

and that "we will start by giving the basic benefits." He referred to the scheme as a "contained general insurance plan" — contained as opposed to comprehensive.

According to the minister, "basic benefits" include physician-provided general healthcare plus obstetrical services, emergency care and essential surgery. Later, the scheme is intended to expand to include other services such as dental treatment and even cosmetic surgery.

The idea is to implement the scheme in carefully defined stages, waiting for one part to work and possibly generate new resources before the next stage is initiated and new groups and more services are added to the plan.

Dr. Malhas said, it will take at least another 12 months of preparation before the first part of the plan is ready for implementation.

The plan will be managed by a semi-independent body, and there will be a law governing its relationship to the government. Dr. Malhas explained.

In a telephone interview Wednesday, President of the Jordan Medical Association (JMA) Ishaq Maraga told the Jordan Times that he did not have specific information concerning the plan, but said that he "very strongly support(s) the principle and the idea of a national medical health insurance scheme."

He expected that the association will be consulted regarding the various problems related to the implementation and operation of the plan.

According to Dr. Malhas, King Hussein as well as Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali who created the medical insurance plan for the military, are keen on seeing national health insurance as another integral part of the development process of Jordan.

Former House speaker thanks King

AMMAN (Petra) — Former Speaker of the 11th Lower House of Parliament Abdul Latif Arabiyat Thursday sent a letter of reply to His Majesty King Hussein, thanking him in his name and on behalf of the members of the House on His Majesty's confidence in them.

"With appreciation and respect I received Your Majesty's kind letter in which Your Majesty has expressed your appreciation of the role of the 11th Lower House in the fields of legislation and monitoring (the government's performance), and of my role (as House speaker) over a period of three years."

Dr. Arabiyat said in his letter: "On behalf of my brothers, the members of the 11th Lower House, and in my name, I thank Your Majesty for your kind appreciation and confidence, and at the same time affirm that our

march, characterised with good deeds, shura (consultation) and faith in a steadfast Jordan, is the solid rock on which all conspiracy attempts and corruption will be shattered," he added.

Dr. Arabiyat expressed his belief that Jordan has achieved great strides because of the King's wise leadership, the Jordanian people's awareness and the efficiency of the country's institutions.

He stressed that all Jordanians will work together under King Hussein's leadership to prevent "the enemies of freedom, shura and democracy," from undermining Jordan's march.

His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday issued a Royal Decree dissolving the Lower House of Parliament and sent a letter to Dr. Arabiyat expressing his deep appreciation to him and his colleagues for their efforts during



Abdul Latif Arabiyat the elected legislative body's session.

Also Wednesday, the government had set Nov. 8 as the date for electing Jordan's 12th Lower House.

Two separate suicides reported

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two people, one of Egyptian nationality, committed suicide in Amman Thursday, according to local press reports.

A 19-year-old Egyptian man identified by the police as A.M. was reported by Sawt Al Shabaab daily Friday to have swallowed a large amount of insecticides.

The Egyptian, who had been working at a hotel in Amman for

one month, had left a letter with another Egyptian worker in the same hotel asking him to send it to his family in Egypt, according to the report quoting the testimony of his fellow worker identified as Ramadan. The letter was reported to be a suicide note.

Ramadan, along with another worker and the son of the hotel owner, found the dying man in his room.

He was taken to Al Bashir Hospital and was pronounced dead upon arrival; police were reported to be investigating the case after they had seized a bag of insecticides described to be highly dangerous, according to the report.

Another report said that a Jordanian, aged 40 years and identified only as FSM, committed suicide by hanging himself.

HOMES NEWS IN BRIEF

Injured tourist well, leaves Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — An Italian tourist who was injured when she fell off a horse in Petra left Amman Friday. She commended the medical treatment offered to her and thanked the Jordanian government and said she will be back to Jordan to complete her tour when she fully recovers. She was visited by Health Minister Abdul-Rahim Malhas Thursday.

Fuheis Festival opens

FUHEIS (Petra) — A cultural festival involving a variety of performances by local and Arab troupes is underway in Fuheis. The festival, formally opened Thursday by Tourism Minister Yanal Hikmat, has been organised by Fuheis Youth Club as part of the Kingdom's coronation anniversary this month.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Bishara Najjar at Eshbela Art Gallery. The paintings depict Jordanian-Palestinian heritage, Jordanian antiquities, Arab Jerusalem, rural life and natural scenery.
★ Exhibition of a new collection of art works by Princess Wijdan Ali at The Gallery, Hotel Jordan InterContinental.

JERUSALEM FESTIVAL

★ Seminar, in Arabic, on "Arts and Creativity Issues" at 6.30 p.m. at the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.
★ Concert by Al Hannouni Troupe for Folk Arts and Al Wihdat Refugee Camp Troupe at 8.30 p.m. at the Roman Amphitheatre, downtown Amman.

By Musa Kellani

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
Established 1975
جريدة الجبل عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية

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Good administrators do not make good businessmen

THE LOCAL press recently carried news reports, corroborated by officials, that a number of Ministry of Supply employees were caught red-handed, recirculating ration coupons that the ministry issues for people to purchase subsidised food. The value of recirculated coupons is reported to have been in excess of JD250,000. The case is not expected to make headlines in the local media, certainly not in the state-run media. But this and similar past cases are symptomatic of the ills inherent in the state's insistence on being the main trader and regulator.

This government and all previous administrations have repeatedly been talking about the virtues of privatisation. As recent as the last week, the incumbent prime minister urged the Ministry of Tourism to allow more space for the private sector to run the industry of tourism. We fail to see how one ministry, in this case tourism, could liberalise when another, the Ministry of Supply imposes prices. This double role of trading and fixing prices defies any purpose of liberalising the economy. And not only that, but it encourages and condones corruption.

The government cannot talk about privatisation when it owns Royal Jordanian, the Transport Corporation, the Telecommunication Corporation, most of the shares of the mainstream press and trades in bread, sugar, meat and milk. Services cannot improve when they are run by bureaucrats whose only aim is to satisfy their bosses and not their customers. If, therefore, is self-defeating and highly frustrating when highly-placed officials keep talking about privatisation while they hold with both hands on to the reins of institutions that right from the start should have been private domains.

We are neither advocating a sudden disengagement nor total surrender of services to the private sector. Both the experiments of Russia — sudden transfer of business — and Britain — near total privatisation of services — have proven to be problem-ridden. As much as the government should refrain from being a business partner in the market, it is duty-bound to ensure that no one person, group of people or corporation has monopoly on one commodity or service. This is basically the function of governments. Public servants can be good administrators, but certainly they cannot make good businessmen. They, human nature dictates, could very easily become corrupt business-bureaucrats.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

NOW THAT the election date has been fixed, the coming three months are bound to witness a flurry of activity on the part of the political parties, said Al Dustour Arabic daily. The paper said that the Jordanian people, who lived for four years enjoying a taste of democracy and took part in the previous parliamentary election, feel quite ready for the election campaign and voting and are most willing to contribute to the democratisation of their Jordanian system. It goes without saying that the coming months will witness rivalry among the parties and political groups as well as individual candidates, but people are more interested in candidates who are capable of achieving the public aspirations or working towards serving the electorate more than those who try to utilise public sentiments through rhetoric and meaningless speeches, said the daily. Furthermore, the eyes of the world, including the enemies of Jordan, will be directed towards Jordan to watch the election campaign and the voting, which we are certain would be free and fair. Indeed, Jordan looks more like an island of democracy located in the midst of a big desert basking very few traces of democracy here and there, added the paper. It expressed hope that the election campaign would contribute most positively and meaningfully towards further enhancing the democratic march in the Kingdom.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i Arabic daily called for the privatisation of Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national air carrier. A foreign auditing company has just completed the task of calculating the profits and losses and assessing the assets and liabilities of RJ and found that its management has achieved a large margin of profits in the past year, said Tareq Masarweh. There is need for a political decision to transform this national company into a private-owned firm so that its operations can be further promoted and these profits increase, said the writer. RJ is indeed part of the national economy as it is an economic institution seeking profits from its operations, therefore, such a successful company should be encouraged to make more profits through allowing the public to buy and sell its shares and participate in its performance, said the writer. He suggested that the government raise the RJ capital and offer shares to the private and public sectors after first helping this national institution settle its outstanding debts.

Jordanian Perspective

Who cashes the cheques in 'operation accountability'?

THE LUKEWARM Arab response to last month's Israeli assault on Lebanon has only underlined the dangerous trend in the Arab psyche that has emerged in the post-Gulf crisis era. To say the least, even editorials in the German and British press were much harsher than what we saw in the Arab media.

There are many factors that have to be kept in view while assessing the impact of the Israeli assault on Lebanon and compare it with the Jewish state's invasion of its northern neighbour in 1982.

No segment of the Lebanese population welcomed the Israelis during the 1982 operation dubbed "Galilee safety" more than Bashir Gemayel's Falangist camp.

Syria, whose armed forces engaged the Israelis in battle before falling back to their positions in 1982, acted in a visibly more suspicious way this time when its Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa declared on July 19 that any attack against Lebanon will be considered an attack against Syria, in line with the Taif agreement to which Saudi Arabia's King Fahd was a guarantor.

But Syria failed to live up to its pledge against repeated Israeli strikes after July 19, leaving one wondering whether we heard Mr. Sharaa right.

In 1982, Syria genuinely observed what the Israeli expert on Lebanon, Uri Lubrani termed as "red lines" in Lebanon. This Syrian approach allowed the massacre of hundreds, if not thousands, of Palestinians in Beirut refugee camps. The heavy Syrian guns which were present in Lebanon turned the other way rather than offering any protection to the Palestinians.

This time again, the Syrians proved that their military umbrella could not offer any protection to the pro-Syrian Hizbullah group or the pro-Iranian Hizbullah let alone the half a million or so civilians who were forced to flee their homes in South Lebanon to escape the fierce Israeli assault.

A closer look at the political givens in Lebanon exposes a much sadder shape of things. As the dust settled in South Lebanon and the Israeli guns stopped barking, it became clear that Syria was among those who cashed the political benefits of Israel's "operation accountability" since the pointed Syrian abstention from trying to stop the Israelis from destroying Hizbullah infrastructure in Lebanon enhanced the stature of Syrian President Hafez Al Assad as a self-restraining, far-sighted peace-maker, keen to maintain a strategic relationship with his new-found friends in Washington.

Next thing we know could even be an Assad visit to the U.S., given the praise that President Bill Clinton and his Secretary of State Warren Christopher heaped on the Syrian leader for his

inaction in Lebanon during the Israeli assault.

It also seems that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat had either sensed or at least been tipped off since June, of the major requirements of salvaging the 21-month-old Middle East peace process through eliminating the last two key obstacles: Hamas and Hizbullah.

By design or coincidence, many Arafat fighters had received "transfer" orders from Lebanon as early as June 6. We might never know whether this move was warranted by the austerity measures that Mr. Arafat has adopted in the face of dwindling Palestinian funds or was a very convenient action to get the fighters out of the way in the face of an imminent Israeli assault.

Did Iran benefit politically from the severe blow that was dealt to Hizbullah?

It is clear that not many in Tehran would shed much tears over the clipped wings of Hizbullah in Lebanon. A major part of the Hizbullah ranks is no supporter of Iranian President Hashemi-Akbar Rafsanjani. They receive their orders from the hardline anti-Rafsanjani camp in Tehran headed by Mohtashemi, a former Iranian ambassador to Syria who moulded Hizbullah in Lebanon in the late 1980s, and former Iranian parliament speaker Karubi, who injected dogmatic extremism into the group.

No doubt, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, who was present in the Syrian capital when the Arab foreign ministers met to discuss the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon, took back a very relieving message to Tehran that not only a potentially explosive situation had been defused but also that the anti-Rafsanjani camp in Iran was slowly being deprived of a card that could be used to embarrass the regime and set back its efforts to improve relations with the West.

Notwithstanding the loud protestations and complaints, the Lebanese government felt relieved, just as its Syrian and Iranian counterparts did, that someone else did the job for it. For one thing, the Israeli assault cleared the way for the Lebanese army to be deployed in the south — something Beirut could not have hoped for as long as the Hizbullah's firepower and popularity remained intact in the south. Any such move by the government of President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister Rafik Hariri could have easily led to another civil war, pitting the army against Hizbullah.

It was also a masterstroke that the Beirut government achieved by coaxing the half a million southerners to return to their shattered homes and villages, thus denying Hizbullah any opportunity to use their presence in and around Beirut as a

political card.

The pro-Syria Amal militia, which was engaged in a running battle with Hizbullah for supremacy among Lebanese Shi'ites, should be now jubilant that the teeth of its archrival have been pulled leaving the Lebanese scene open for Amal dominance, which in turn benefits not only Damascus but also the Saudis, its bankroller.

Egypt was not about to be left on the wings as the scenario unfolded in Lebanon. Its foreign minister, Amr Musa, flew to Beirut a few days before the Israeli assault began in what could be nothing but an effort to snatch the Lebanese card away from the Syrians. But the efforts collapsed with the Israeli bombardment. Many analysts see Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as a skillful manipulator of his country's public opinion. He needs domestically the image of being tough before agreeing to any deal with the Palestinians or Syrians. Otherwise, he will lose his pro-Lebanon Labour constituency to Shimon Peres if not to Likud's Netanyahu. Prior to any political deal for what could be called a concession, Mr. Rabin dons his tough guy mantle as he did in December 1992 when over 400 Hamas and Jihadists were deported to Marj Al Zuhour just before serious commitments given to Faisal Hussein.

It is the same tactic used by Mr. Rabin when he announced the total closure of the West Bank and Gaza. Mr. Rabin's candid feel for the fluctuations in Israel's public opinion dictated his announcement that "military operations cannot eradicate terrorism in Lebanon. A leeway price has already been paid for those delusions."

So, we can conclude that Mr. Rabin wanted to remove a political obstacle to the peace process that neither the Lebanese nor the Syrians could remove. Mr. Rabin's statements foreshadowed Mr. Christopher's happy announcement of a major "surprise" between Syria and Israel.

But the fact remains that the Arab trauma resulting from the second Gulf war had transformed the Arab psyche in such a way to make the peoples pliable enough to accept all the new arrangements that will take place in this region.

It could be part of a divine political irony that the same anniversary of Nasser's revolution witnesses the nadir of Arab humiliation, apathy and fraternal double-crossing. The U.S. reaction to what happened in Lebanon shows that different criteria are always applied when the casualties are Bosnian Muslims or Lebanese civilians. Even at the United Nations, it transpired that its Charter is interpreted differently when the victim is a non-white, non-Anglo-Saxon, and non-Protestant.

Arms control and security in the Mideast

On July 29, 1993, Robert J. Einhorn, deputy assistant secretary of state for nonproliferation, addressed the Washington Institute's Policy Forum on U.S. arms control policy in the Middle East. The following is a summary of his remarks:

Middle East arms control will be an important component of U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s. Despite the ongoing peace process, the Middle East remains one of the most overarmed regions in the world. Arms expenditures occupy a greater portion of the regional states' budgets than anywhere else in the world. Many Middle East countries possess larger stocks of hardware than most members of NATO. Finally, over half the countries in the region either have or are trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Supply and demand

There are two main components of U.S. arms control strategy in the Middle East: the supply side of arms sales and the demand side.

The supply side strategy focuses on export control groups, like the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, the Australia Group on chemical weapons, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the discussions among the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council on arms exports to the Middle East. This strategy seeks to convince major arms suppliers that the continued sale of destabilising military hardware and dual-use technologies to the Middle East undermines international peace and security. Of special concern are two groups of countries: those inclined to sell nuclear technology to the Middle East; and those countries in the Middle East — so-called "rogue" regimes — determined to use this technology to advance their anti-status quo agendas.

Iran and Iraq provide two examples of where U.S. policy has focused. Iran is currently seeking the full spectrum of weapons systems, conventional and non-conventional. The U.S. has undertaken a major diplomatic effort to discourage Russia, China, Japan, and Western Europe from selling advanced weapons and technologies — especially nuclear technology — to Iran. The time to stop Iran's nuclear capability is now, in its infancy.

With Iraq, the U.S. has actively supported all U.N. efforts to destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The long-term goal is to prevent the expansion of Iraq's military capabilities to ensure that it never poses a threat to the region. While Saddam Hussein has recently demonstrated a greater willingness to cooperate with the U.N.'s efforts to establish a long-term monitoring programme, he is still trying to avoid full compliance; his aim is to do the minimum necessary to get the embargo against Iraqi oil exports lifted.

This supply side strategy has faced some difficulties. For example, China backed out of Middle

East supplier talks when the U.S. proceeded with the sale of F-16s to Taiwan. The challenge for U.S. policy is how to convince other suppliers to stop destabilising sales to rogue regimes, even as the U.S. continues military cooperation with its friends in the region. Avoiding the charge of "double standard" while continuing to promote U.S. strategic interests will be one of the key issues addressed when the Clinton administration unveils its soon to be completed review of U.S. arms sales policy.

The demand side of U.S. strategy seeks to curtail the perceived need by Middle East countries for the acquisition of weapons. One way to do so is through formal arms control accords like the Chemical Weapons Convention of January 1993. Another method, focusing on enhancing regional communication, is the Arms Control Working Group of the multilateral track of the Arab-Israeli peace process. Involving thirteen regional parties, including the Palestinians, and several extra-regional countries, the arms group has held three formal meetings.

The Arabs and Israel have brought two different perspectives to the meetings. The Arabs, led by Egypt, want to address weapons of mass destruction first. Israel, in contrast, believes equal time must be spent discussing the control of conventional weapons in the region.

Despite these differences, three points of consensus have emerged within the group. One is that arms control does not operate in a vacuum, and should be pursued within the framework of the peace process. Two, that arms control should be pursued on a step-by-step basis. And three, that the arms control process must be comprehensive and take account of the needs and concerns of all the region's actors.

All parties agree that there is an urgency to address arms control issues. Meetings of the group have served a very useful educational purpose. But now we need to push for concrete results.

To help achieve that goal, the group has agreed to hold a series of seminars in different countries in between formal sessions. Most recently, a seminar on verification was held in Cairo in July. The U.S. believes that the most fruitful area for real progress in the talks would be an agreement to begin implementing a series of confidence-building measures. Finally, the group needs to get important regional participants in the peace process, especially Syria and Lebanon, to join the multilateral talks.

The Clinton administration knows that arms control in the Middle East is not going to be an easy process. And it understands that both the supply and demand sides must be urgently addressed. Ultimately, however, while tackling the supply sector "can buy us time," real stability will depend on reducing the excessive demand for arms in the region.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

U.S. seems happy with peace talks inertia

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

The U.S. secretary of state's latest tour of the region, Israel's aggression on Lebanon and the prospects of the Middle East peace acquired most attention in the local press in the past week. Domestic affairs were also extensively discussed.

Commenting on Warren Christopher's mission, Sawt Al Shaab daily said that the American secretary has now listened to the views of the Arab parties in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine and therefore ought to take one step forward to translate the American pledges into action.

The U.S. secretary has beard Jordan's clear demand for a just and honourable peace but has divulged nothing at the press conference following his talks in Amman apart from saying that peace could come before the end of 1993.

It was noticed however that Washington was only interested in keeping the negotiations going even without yielding anything positive, something opposed by the Arab parties' demand for immediate action towards the implementation of U.N. resolutions, said the paper.

Projecting a pessimistic view about the U.S. secretary of state's tour, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily said that Washington was merely peddling Israel's ideas in the Arab World. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Israeli aggression on southern Lebanon, one can say that Mr. Christopher was making the tour in pursuit of America's well-known carrot and stick policy, said Tareq Masarweh.

The writer said that Mr. Christopher brought no new American ideas to the Arabs and was only trying to present Israel's views which refuse to include Jerusalem in the peace process or consider the implementation of U.N. resolutions on which the peace process has been based.

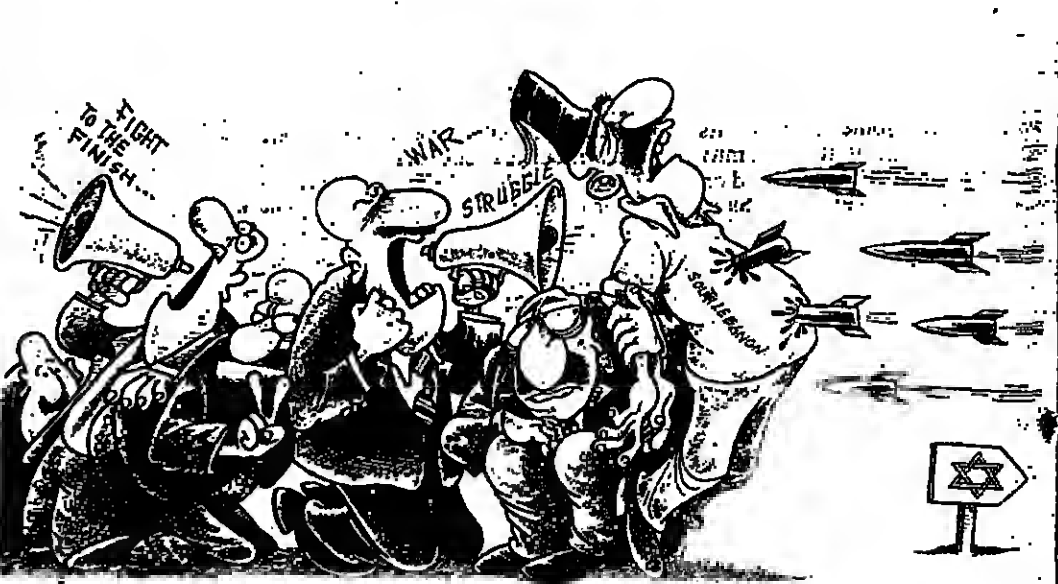
Ahmad Al Mistleh, another Al Ra'i columnist, said that the United States could succeed in prodding the Arab parties to taking part in the 12th round of peace negotiations and could also, eventually impose a settlement on the Arabs, but can not achieve a lasting peace in the region.

The writer said that Washington is now involved in imposing the U.S.-Israeli formula of peace on the Arabs merely to safeguard its economic interests and to strengthen its own leadership of the world, as a sole superpower.

He said that Mr. Christopher should listen carefully to the Arab masses, rather than to the governments, and should understand that the carrot and stick policy would never work.

Commenting on Mr. Christopher's mission, Ibrahim Al Aboi, another columnist in Al Ra'i, said that the American secretary is asking the Lebanese and other Arabs to

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forget about their sufferings and their wounds and move forward to the negotiating table with Israel.

Mr. Christopher has made it clear to the Arab parties that Israel's latest aggression on Lebanon could be repeated unless the Arabs accept the U.S. Zionist formula for peace in the region.

How can the Arabs move forward towards peace with Israel if Washington had itself abandoned the idea of exchanging land for peace and stopped considering Palestinian lands as occupied territory? asked the writer.

In Salameh Ekour's view, Israel's aggression on Lebanon has facilitated Mr. Christopher's mission. Of course, said the writer in Sawt Al Shaab, the Israeli aggression was encouraged by the United States in order to give impetus to the deadlocked peace process.

He said that Mr. Christopher is finding it easy now to deal with the Arab regimes which are weak and cannot confront the Israeli military and so Mr. Christopher is bound to achieve his mission in the region.

Only eight Hizbullah members were killed in the latest Israeli offensive on southern Lebanon, said Mazen Hamad, a columnist in Al Dastour. If the aim of the offensive was to get rid of the "terrorist" Hizbullah, why were so many villages razed to the ground? asked the writer.

Resisting occupation is a right of people under a foreign ruler and as long as Israel occupies Arab lands, the Arabs are bound to resist this occupation, said the writer. He said that the destruction of Arab villages was also intended as a means of terrorising the Arab Nation into accepting Israel's settlement formula.

Blinded by military power and Zionist expansionist de-

signs, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin launched a devastating war on Lebanon in the past week, said Mohammad Kharoub in Al Ra'i daily. Mr. Rabin launched the war first to brighten his image on the domestic front and second to terrorise the Arab Nation, forcing it to accept Israel's occupation, said the writer. Also, by forcing the Lebanese to leave their homes, Mr. Rabin has hoped to pressure the Lebanese government into accepting Israel's permanent occupation of the south, he added.

Hizbullah was not alone targeted by the Israeli offensive in southern Lebanon last week, said Mahmoud Rimawi in Al Ra'i daily. The writer said that the Israelis aimed at ending all opposition to their idea of peace with the Arab countries and pressuring the Lebanese government into accepting the idea of permanent occupation in the south by offering the pretext of fighting Hizbullah.

Israel, said the writer, had hoped that the Lebanese people would turn their anger on the Hizbullah resistance forces instead of the occupation forces of South Lebanon.

In Sultan al Hattab's view, the Israeli offensive in Lebanon has failed at the military as well as the diplomatic levels. The columnist, who writes for Al Ra'i daily, said that the Katyusha rockets still fall on Israeli settlements, despite the war on Hizbullah, and the Arabs are still holding tight to their rights in their dealings with the Americans and the Israelis at the peace negotiations.

The writer said that the Israelis will pay the cost of their own blunder as they did when they sent their troops to Lebanon in 1982.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily demanded that Jordan withdraw its ambassador from Kuwait and refuse to recognise

the Gulf states. Fahd Al Fanek said that while the Kuwaitis are allowed to maintain an embassy in Amman, Jordan is not allowed to reopen its embassy in Kuwait as Kuwaiti officials continue to level various accusations at the Kingdom.

The writer said that Jordan had not recognised Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in August 1990 and yet the Kuwaitis are showing deep hostility towards Jordan for its call on the Arab World to settle the issue without involving foreign nations.

It is true that the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) is exerting efforts to train people in various trades and helping solve the unemployment problem in Jordan, yet, the country requires quality rather than quantity, said Ahmad Dabbas, a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab daily.

He said that the VTC should heed repeated public complaints about inefficient tradesmen, mechanics, electricians and builders who are in need of better training because they handle their tasks badly, and cause economic losses to the country.

Mohammad Ibrahim Daoud, a columnist in Al Dastour, called for the implementation of a national health scheme which, he said, would cost JD 80 million. Financial considerations should never stop the concerned authorities from implementing this vital project for the country, said the writer.

The money can simply be collected from the beneficiaries and those organisations employing them, suggested the writer.

He said that 90 per cent of the population find themselves unable to pay the cost of their medical treatment in view of the rising prices of drugs and the high charges of specialists.

U.S. legislators narrowly pass Clinton's budget deficit reduction plan

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. House of Representatives passed President Bill Clinton's crucial budget deficit plan by a two-vote margin Thursday, handing him victory after a full-scale political battle whose outcome was uncertain until the last votes were cast.

Mr. Clinton celebrated the cliff-hanger victory with a statement in the White House Rose Garden, calling the vote "an important first step in changing America."

By a 218-216 vote the budget bill was sent to the Senate, which was to vote late Friday. One undecided Senate vote — that of Democrat Bob Kerrey of Nebraska — separated Democrats from the majority needed for final passage there.

"This will not be itself accomplished what we need to do but it is a critical beginning," said House Speaker Democrat Thomas Foley in pleading for support, moments before the vote started.

"We must continue the process of deficit reduction and we will," said Mr. Foley.

Before the vote, administration officials warned defeat would deal a crippling blow to the Clinton presidency. Approval opened the way to the remainder of Mr. Clinton's agenda, most impor-

antly health care reform.

At the end of the 15 minutes allotted for voting, the tally board showed a vote of 216-214 with four Democrats yet to vote. When two of the four finally voted "yes" at the end of several agonising minutes, a cheer went up from Democrats.

"This economic plan represents an important first step in changing America. For the first time in a very long time, we are making a meaningful down-payment on the federal deficit," said Mr. Clinton in his Rose Garden appearance amid cheering White House staff members.

The margin was close but the mandate is clear, he said.

In the end, 41 Democrats joined all 175 Republicans in opposing the measure. By comparison, the original version of the bill had a more comfortable six-vote margin.

"The American people should know that a large number of congressmen who voted... in favour of change for our country did so believing in their hearts that they were going to greatly increase the chances of not being reelected," said Vice President Al Gore, appearing on Cable News Network.

During debate Republicans said passage of the bill would

Leading world economists applaud end of 'narrow' ERM

LONDON (AFP) — Six of the world's most eminent economists, including three Nobel prizewinners, Friday applauded the end of the "narrow" European Exchange Rate (ERM) saying the new wider bands presented a "significant opportunity."

In an article in the Financial Times, they argued that last weekend's decision to loosen exchange rate fluctuation bands to 15 per cent was "sound and pragmatic" and that the move had been "inevitable."

"It is wrong to believe that something precious was lost last weekend; on the contrary, the liberation of currencies previously trapped in the ERM offers a significant opportunity to recapture the buoyant spirit that animated Europe in the run-up to 1992."

The economists had previously called for France to lead the way in the abandonment of the ERM, arguing that Europe was repeating the mistakes of the 1930s when countries tried to maintain currency values despite economic depression.

The six — Olivier Blanchard, Rudiger Dornbusch, Stanley Fischer, Franco Modigliani, Paul Samuelson and Robert Solow — are all professors of economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Professors Modigliani, Samuelson and Solow are past recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize for economics.

The economists argued in favour of speculation, adding that by prematurely hardening exchange rates, the central bankers and finance ministers of Europe had given speculators "the proverbial one-way bet."

"In this case the speculators were the best friend of the unemployed, and — even though we will not hear that admission — of the monetary officials who had assumed unsustainable commitments," they wrote.

"Rather than look back and dream of punishing speculators, officials need now to exploit the new-found freedom to fight unemployment, of course paying due respect to inflation risks."

"All (countries) must be concerned to avoid a recurrence of inflation, a task easier for some than for others. But they also must give urgent priority to expansion, because that is the only way to bring down unemployment."

"Low interest rates are the fastest affordable way, given actual or imagined constraints to fiscal action, to get there." Finally, they all must look beyond recovery to give more emphasis to the supply side; more room for incentives, more flexibility, less status quo, they concluded.

China tightens up on taxes

PEKING (R) — China has banned widespread unauthorised tax breaks and even temporary exemptions for financial hardship cases, seeking to curb tax evasion losses that top \$17 billion a year, official reports said Friday.

"The state will not issue new policies of any kind regarding tax reductions and exemptions in the remainder of this year and will stop giving permission for tax cuts, even in cases of difficulty or as temporary measures," the official Xinhua News Agency reported a nationwide decree saying.

Tax administration officials said 100 billion yuan (\$17.2 billion) in taxes go uncollected each year — about five times the projected budget deficit for 1993 of 20.5 billion yuan (\$3.5 billion).

"Officials fear that runaway tax losses could bust the budget," the official China Daily said.

The State Council decree said banks must stop holding up tax payments and deliver them promptly and ordered a crackdown on export-related tax-

refund fraud.

It ordered cancellation of preferential tax treatment and unauthorised local tax cuts, including those for foreign-funded ventures and nonofficial development zones.

Main targets are "fake" Sino-foreign ventures that are funded solely by domestic sources. Foreign-funded firms enjoy attractive tax holidays in the first few years of business.

The State Council, mindful of soaring deficits, warned that state revenue has not grown significantly in 1993 and tax collection has not kept pace with China's 14 per cent growth.

"Violations of state tax laws and policies — including unauthorised tax cuts, granting preferential tax policies without state permission and tax evasion through illicit contracts of turnover taxes by enterprises — have led to great losses in state revenues," it said.

The nationwide tax circular appeared somewhat at odds with an official announcement last month that Peking was planning a tax break for low-income earners hit by inflation in cities running at an annual 20 per cent.

The decree ordered more diligent collection of taxes from China's growing ranks of self-employed entrepreneurs.

Peking is tantalised by the prospect of taxing the nation's rapidly growing individual wealth and is on track to collect far more than last year's record \$161 million.

Statistics show collection from individuals totalled \$55.2 million from January through April, a 27 per cent jump that outstripped growth of industrial and commercial tax revenues.

Tax collection has become a dangerous calling in China.

Since 1985, attacks on tax officials in the course of their work have left 22 dead, 36 crippled and 1,452 seriously injured nationwide and there had been 1,916 attacks on tax officials, the official Economic Reference News said last month.

Indian firms tap low-cost overseas funds

BOMBAY (AFP) — A growing number of financial companies here are linking with foreign firms to offer a range of specialised services as India pursues integration with the global economy.

The low cost of foreign equity and high interest rates in India, which range from 16 to 24 per cent against eight to 10 per cent overseas, are spurring financial service joint ventures.

Experts say the domestic financial services sector stands to benefit from an infusion of modern technology and enhanced professionalism by linking with foreign companies.

"The alliance with foreign institutions will help the domestic market, especially in services such as securitisation, bridge loans and venture capital funds," said Mahesh Thakkar, spokesman for the Association of Leasing and Financial Services Companies.

The most recent example is a consumer credit venture between India's Housing and Development Finance Corp. and U.S.-based G.E. Capital.

Among others, the Industrial Credit and Investment Corp. of India, joined with J.P. Morgan, the Unit Trust of India with Alliance Capital and the Industrial Development Bank of India with Asian Capital.

"It is a boom time. Many more such tie-ups are in the pipeline," said a representative of the foreign stockbroking firm W.I. Carr.

Financial experts say massive profits reported by several foreign banks here attracted the attention of ambitious Indian entrepreneurs.

"When Citibank's Indian operations reported a profit of 1.39 billion rupees (\$46 million) in 1992, it was felt the bank's aggressive marketing had paid off," a spokesman for mutual fund giant Unit Trust of India said.

"But the real reason was the diversion of funds to take advantage of the difference in interest rates as well as the range of specialised services it offered."

Market sources said Citibank had been lending funds here in the booming consumer finance market at interest rates of 23 to 24 per cent.

"Although the rupee has depreciated in the long run against the dollar, the bank could make up this loss due to the high interest rates here," the spokesman said.

As the Indian economy globalises under the government's two-year-old economic reform programme, domestic financial companies have found that ventures with foreign firms are the only way to survive increased competition.

"Innovative products and services would also be available with tie-ups with multinational financial services firms," said Thakkar, adding such tie-ups are also necessary as foreign institutional investors bring money into the Indian capital market.

Gold market stunned into silence after price fall

LONDON (R) — The gold market was stunned into silence Friday following the largest one-day fall in the bullion price since it plunged by around \$35 in the hours after the Gulf war started in January 1991.

Heavy selling by U.S. investment funds of speculative positions bought during the metal's recent surge precipitated the steep decline.

From about \$399 an ounce in morning trading on Thursday, the gold price plunged to around \$372 later in the day before recovering to \$381.90 at its London morning fixing Friday.

"The funds came in and sold everything, it was a bloodbath. They took no prisoners last night," one dealer said, adding that the market was licking its wounds this morning. "Everyone is staying out (of the market) today, nobody wants to trade."

Dealers said very wide spreads between buying and selling prices were being quoted, which was deterring interest. "Morning trading generally on Friday was confined to book-squaring and waiting for the American data," one commented.

They were waiting to see what scheduled U.S. economic figures — for non-farm payrolls, unemployment and consumer credit — would show about prospects for inflation.

One dealer said gold could trade within a fairly wide \$375/\$385 range during the day and would "probably touch both sides of that several times, it's very nervous."

The market reached \$409 at the start of the week, equalling a peak hit on the outbreak of the Gulf war and showing a rise of more than 25 per cent since a seven-year low of \$326 in March.

Other precious metals were also in retreat.

Silver, traditionally more volatile than gold, lost nearly 15 per cent of its value. From a high of almost \$5.25 an ounce on Thursday it plunged to \$4.50 in far eastern trading before recovering to fix at \$4.82 Friday.

Platinum fell more than \$20 from its \$411.40 morning setting on Thursday but recovered slightly to \$392.35 at Friday's fix.

Dealers said the fund selling might have been triggered by Chinese central bank sales. China was rumoured in the market to have sold up to 10 tonnes of gold on Thursday but dealers said that alone would not have moved price much.

"The market was also awash with rumours of other central bank activity and further Australian and South African mine selling."

However, dealers and analysts said that although gold's upward run had suffered a knock, it was not out for the count.

"We should all remember that a week ago we were only at \$390 so what are we all worried about, nothing," one dealer said.

"What's a 10 drop when you've had a 60 rally."

Panel finds solutions to revive U.S. airline industry

WASHINGTON (R) — A special commission formed to try to revitalise the U.S. airline industry has formally approved recommendations which include cutting taxes and letting foreign carriers buy up to 49 per cent of U.S. airlines.

The panel, which also called for an easing of regulatory burdens, released a draft of its recommendations on July 19 and is to present them to President Bill Clinton and Congress on Aug. 19.

The commission called for legislation to permit a foreign carrier to buy as much as 49 per cent of the voting stock in a U.S. airline, up from the present 25 per cent, provided the foreign airline's host state maintains a liberal aviation policy.

Commission members including businessmen, financiers, lawyers, transportation consultants and industry executives, called in a 14-1 vote for the air traffic, control functions of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to be run as a separate corporate entity, with adequate financing to quickly modernise the U.S. air traffic control system.

And it recommended a committee be formed to warn the Transportation Department when an airline was nearing insolvency to ward off any risk to the travelling public and the industry.

Many U.S. carriers have been in an out of bankruptcy in recent years and critics say their cutting fares while able to postpone paying debts is giving them an unfair advantage.

Niger to cut salary spending, raise taxes

NIAMEY (R) — Niger has told the International Monetary Fund it plans to cut salary spending and increase tax receipts this year in line with a medium-term structural adjustment programme.

The official ANP news agency said the government planned to cut wage spending to 36 billion CFA francs (\$121 million) in 1993 from 38 billion (\$128 million) in 1991 by reducing recruitment, encouraging early retirement and lowering some salaries.

The government spent 40 billion (\$135 million) on wages in 1992.

ANP said the government aimed to increase tax receipts by 4.3 per cent over the previous year to 53 billion CFA francs (\$178 million) in 1993. Planned measures include enlarging the tax base, introducing some new taxes and revising others.

In 1992, a large proportion of the tax income, almost 30 billion CFA francs (\$100 million), was spent on servicing foreign debt of \$1.6 billion.

Niger is impoverished by drought and has few natural resources except uranium. Gross domestic product growth fell to minus 6.5 per cent in 1992 from minus 0.5 per cent, government figures show.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Your family is expecting a great deal from you now, though little is said, so be sure you do your utmost to bring greater harmony and security into that important sphere of your somewhat puzzling circumstances.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) During the daytime get into whatever has awaited your attention and requires coordination and systems while tonight be with good friends and avoid a scrappy official.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have a good day to arrange whatever entertainments, recreation that appeals to you while tonight please your mate and avoid an older person you've just met.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have some situation at your residence you can improve and make operate as you wish during the day but tonight steer clear of put off duties.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Don't let an older partner take up your evening after a day at which you dash around doing whatever is required of you in public matters.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be very practical in whatever you do especially in getting property, possessions in good shape while tonight don't get into a work matter that talks.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Think about what you can do to push your own personal interests to a new success and well being and put in motion today but tonight avoid recreations.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Make a campaign for future growth and expansion today privately or with a confidential advisor and tonight use care not to upset a family member.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is the day for you to get out and discuss future plans with selective and discriminating friends and acquaintances, tonight mail over advice given.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Be alert to the various civic or credit conditions that you can work out today but tonight keep away from public places where there could be trouble.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You can look into all kinds of new interests during daylight hours and benefit by data obtained but tonight look out for an angry official.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Get into whatever responsibilities you have for you can handle them with more than usual astuteness but tonight rest and relax on your laurels.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Find out by asking directly where you stand with partners during the daytime and come to a new agreement but tonight do nothing to upset any associate.

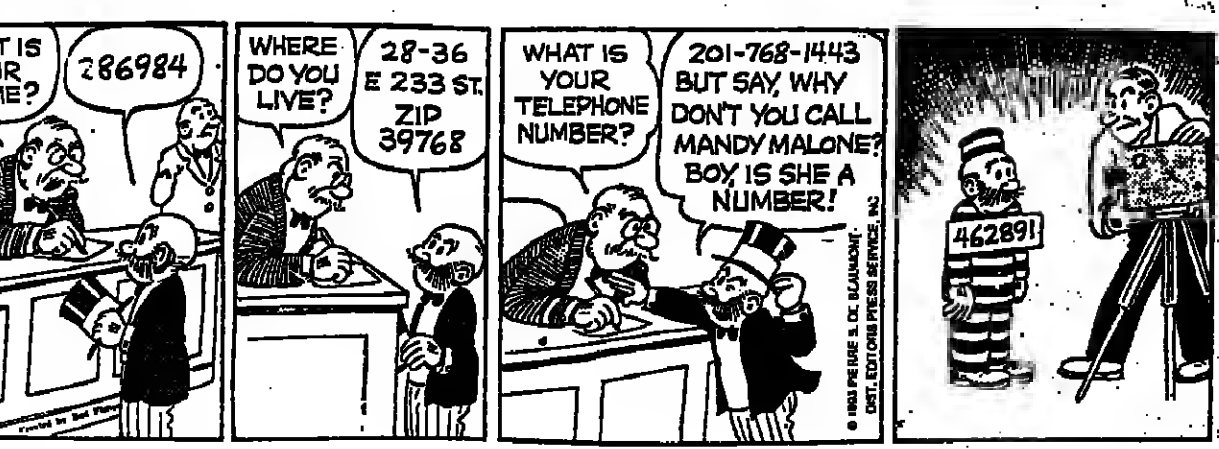
Peanuts



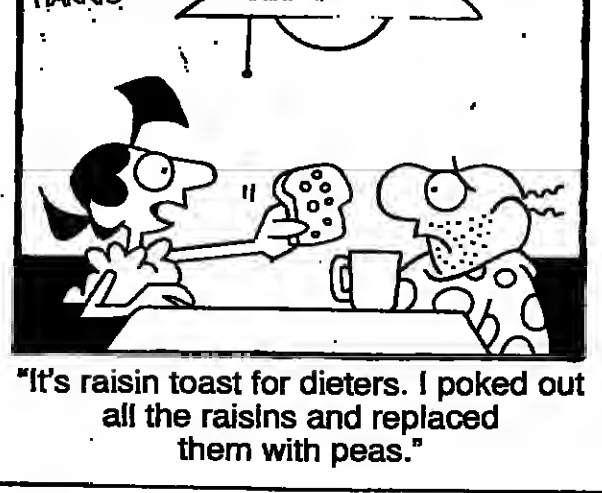
Andy Capp



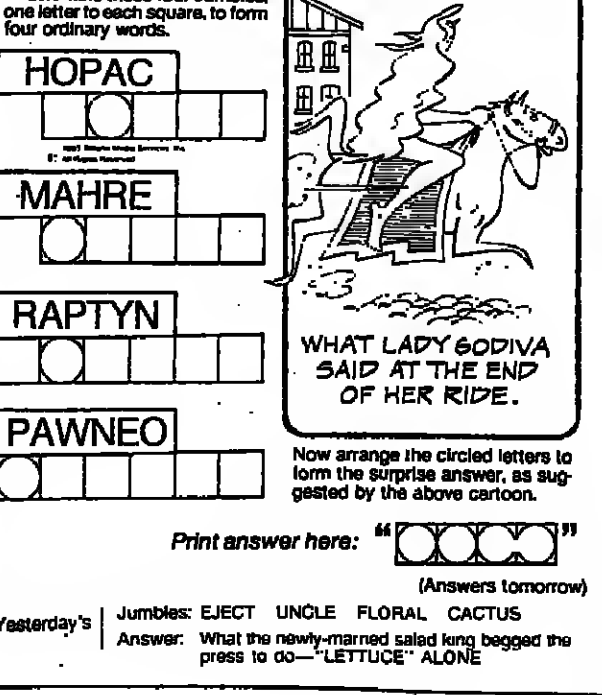
Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Harris



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



THE Daily Crossword by James Barrick



UAE says it is continuing bank reforms

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Rival Bosnian generals meet to mull Serb withdrawal offer

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Serb army chief General Ratko Mladic went to Sarajevo Airport Friday to formally offer newly-captured mountain positions to U.N. peacekeeping monitors, provided they are also denied to Muslim forces.

As the talks got under way, the United States-inspired threat to strike at Serb forces from the air came in for more criticism, and the U.N. announced a new relief mission to save up to two million from possible starvation this winter.

Gen. Mladic was meeting with his opposite number General Rasim Delic, commander of the Muslim-led Bosnian army, and U.N. commander in Bosnia General Francis Briguemont.

Acceptance of the offer by Bosnia's beleaguered Muslim-led government was seen as a key step in a successful resumption of peace talks in Geneva next week. International mediator Lord Owen told a news conference, in Geneva that Muslim, Serb and Croat leaders had agreed to restart the talks Monday.

NATO states, which have

backed a U.S. plan to launch air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs if they tighten their siege of Sarajevo, are due to meet in Brussels Monday to discuss the controversial threat.

The Serb offer to quit newly-taken positions on Igman and Bjelasnica Mountains and open two roads to bring relief aid to Sarajevo was seen as a shrewd move to bring the Muslim side back to the Geneva negotiations, while warding off air strikes.

Observers in Sarajevo, however, said there was some suspicion that by turning over the two peaks to the U.N. with the stipulation that they remain neutral, the Serbs were effectively blocking the main Muslim army supply route.

Gen. Briguemont cautioned that nothing was settled yet. "We have no agreement. It was a common statement and a proposal," he told a news briefing.

"The zone which will be evacuated by the Serb side must be a sort of free zone only occupied by UNPROFOR elements... if they don't agree I shall say (the) proposal is impossible to implement in

the field."

The U.N. meanwhile announced its intention to reopen the main land route for aid to Sarajevo and central Bosnia, which has been closed for a week by a Muslim offensive in central Bosnia.

Launching "operation lifeline" with a warning that the survival of up to 2.2 million people this winter was at stake, Gen. Briguemont said the U.N. had to "take new measures to help avert a human tragedy of immense proportions."

He called for hundreds more U.N. troops, including reconnaissance soldiers, engineering squadrons, logistics staff and military police to ensure the success of the venture.

In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation, Lord Owen said the threat of air strikes had been a "tremendous incentive" to the Muslims not to negotiate seriously for the past week.

Gen. Briguemont also criticised the air attack plan, saying it could bring down Serb retaliation on his 9,000 peacekeepers.

"I won't say it's easy to issue threats from outside Bosnia but it is something which is like studying maps at military headquarters," he said.

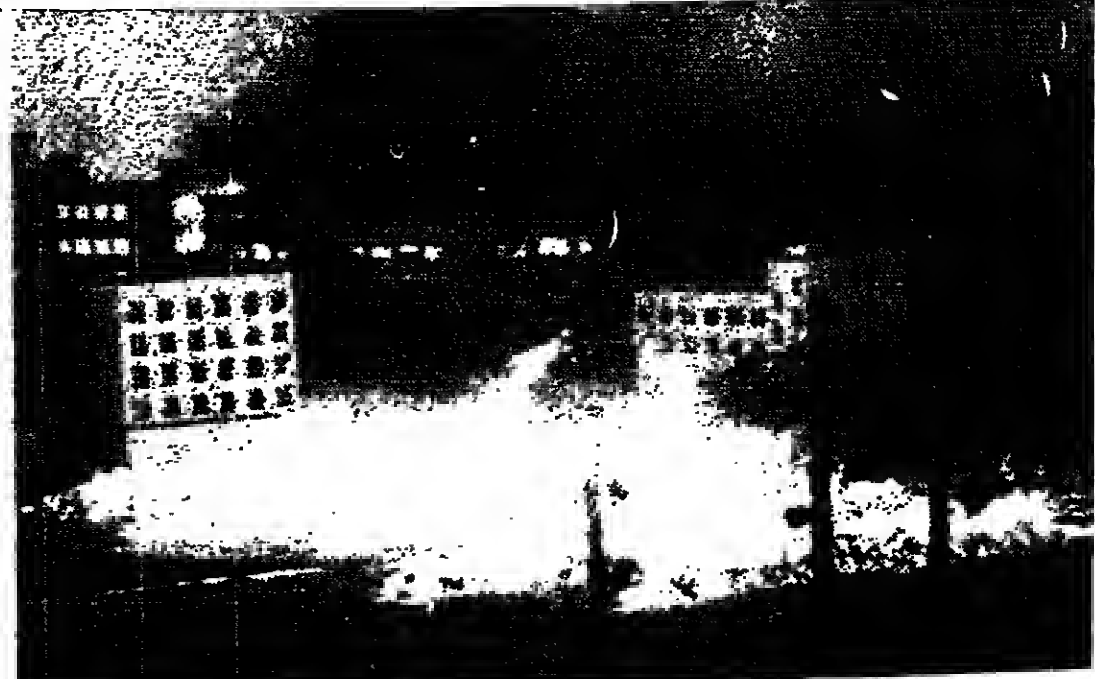
"I can tell you that it is a major worry for me because we are on a peacekeeping footing in an area where there has never been peace. It is easier to make threats than to carry them out," the Belgian general added.

But in Washington, the threat appeared to recede, with a senior U.S. State Department official saying it may take another meeting after next Monday to decide on action.

The official denied the process was being dragged out.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was due in Italy Friday to discuss military operations in Bosnia, including air strikes, with NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner. NATO spokesman said.

But Friday's Washington Post quoted an official of the Clinton administration as saying: "With luck, if the talks go well, we won't have to bomb them at all. That is the primary goal."



A fire rages in the warehouse district in Shenzhen after it was sparked by two fierce explosions on Thursday (AFP photo)

China to probe massive industrial blasts

SHENZHEN, China (AFP) — China set up a special squad Friday to probe the cause of the massive explosion Thursday that rocked the flagship city of its liberal economic programme, and issued health warnings to alarmed residents.

As the toll in the special economic zone of Shenzhen continued to vary widely, Chinese Vice Premier Zou Jiahua flew in from Peking to assess the destruction and the provincial government in Guangzhou and Shenzhen's government set up two disaster teams, officials said.

One team will check why explosive materials had been stored in the warehouse district in northern Shenzhen, close to a depot for domestic propane gas and also a storage site for hydrogen gas, Shenzhen spokesman Huang Xinbua said.

The other will supervise the cleanup and make provision for the victims, he said.

Firefighters, troops and police joined Friday in quenching the final embers of a fire triggered by an immense double blast that was so strong that residents in nearby

Hong Kong feared an earthquake had occurred.

According to the latest official tally, eight people were confirmed dead, although the figure could rise as the search of ruins covering 20,000 square metres (200,000 square feet) got underway. Hospitals admitted 140 injured, some seriously ill.

But the semi-official Hong Kong China News Service and Shenzhen Television said at least 70 were killed, and residents told reporters they had seen between 30 and 40 bodies hauled from the wreckage.

Shenzhen authorities issued televised warnings, telling city inhabitants and farmers not to drink water from local wells and to wash and cook their fruit and vegetables thoroughly, while tests were carried out.

The explosion sent a gigantic mushroom cloud of gas and dust into the sky, triggering fears of toxic contamination.

Hong Kong, which depends on the region for its drinking water, said no change had been detected in water quality, but it strengthened border controls on im-

ported vegetables, especially from Shenzhen, which supplies 10 per cent of its needs.

The catastrophe hit the model city in Peking's economic liberalisation policy, a programme viewed by some critics as unleashing a free-wheeling rush for economic growth that has often ignored safety standards.

A government source, reached by telephone from Hong Kong, said top officials in Peking were alarmed of "international embarrassment" for China.

"They fear such a serious accident could surely raise questions (from foreign investors) on how the country is coping with its safety measures," he said.

There were fears the blast could even affect Peking's bid to host the 2000 Olympics, which will be decided by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Sept. 23, he suggested.

Officials and the local press said the first explosion, in an open storage area, involved the ignition of ammonium nitrate, a compound usable in fertilisers and explosives.

Charges filed against alleged 'madam to the stars'

LOS ANGELES (R) — A woman who authorities have dubbed Hollywood's "madam to the stars" was charged with running a high-priced call girl ring and trafficking in cocaine. Heidi Fleiss, 27, whose client list has been rumoured to include celebrities and studio executives, could be sentenced to up to 11 years in prison if convicted. Ms. Fleiss was arrested on June 5 in an undercover operation in which a detective posed as a businessman seeking to provide women for his Japanese clients. She was later released on \$100,000 bail. She was charged Thursday with five felony counts of pandering "by procuring for prostitution" and one count of sale or transportation of cocaine, the district attorney's office said. Arraignment was set for next Monday. "The allegation is that there were a lot of Hollywood figures involved in this," a district attorney's spokesman said. He declined to give names or provide details of the case.

Clinton may have half-sister — paper

PHOENIX, Arizona (R) — President Bill Clinton, who already has a California man who says he's a half-brother, may also have a half-sister living in Arizona, a Phoenix newspaper reported Thursday. A 52-year-old Tucson woman's birth certificate lists William Jefferson Blythe of Sherman, Texas as her father... the same name as Mr. Clinton's father, the Arizona Republic reported. Sharon Pettijohn was born with the last name Blythe in Kansas, Missouri on May 11, 1941, five years before Mr. Clinton's mother married his father, a travelling salesman who died only weeks before Mr. Clinton was born. White House spokesman Dee Dee Myers Thursday declined comment on the report.

Soprano Montserrat Caballe hospitalised with heart trouble

BARCELONA (AP) — Opera star Montserrat Caballe, whose versatile soprano inaugurated the 1992 summer Olympics, was hospitalised with what appeared to be minor heart problems and was expected to be released in two to five days. Caballe, 60, was in the coronary unit at the Corachan Clinic for "slight heart insufficiencies," Dr. Jordi Trias De Bes said. He told reporters she would remain in intensive care for 24 hours. He said she was totally conscious and described her as "content, relaxed and in good spirits." Dr. Trias De Bes gave no specifics about the nature of Caballe's heart problems but said he thought they were minor, which would allow her to quickly resume her performing schedule.

U.S. introduces law on TV violence

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bills designed to rein in violent television programming were introduced in the House and Senate. The House measure, requiring that sets be equipped with a computer chip to block out certain shows, was immediately assailed by CBS. That bill was introduced with bipartisan support. The Senate bill would require the government to regulate violence much as it does indecency. "This is the beginning of government regulation of programme content, and no matter how well intended, is contrary to the principles of a free society. Therefore, CBS will oppose the bill as presently drafted," the network said in a statement on the house legislation. CBS had no immediate comment on the Senate bill, which would require the Federal Communications Commission to develop standards for violent programming and designate the hours of the day in which it could be broadcast, to protect children from exposure.

Jurassic Park Is Britain's highest grossing film

LONDON (R) — Steven Spielberg's dinosaur blockbuster Jurassic Park has become Britain's highest grossing film of all time, its distributors said Thursday. United International Pictures (UIP) said the film earned £24.2 million (\$36.3 million) since it was released on July 16. "Jurassic Park has broken all daily and weekly box office records and thousands of house records at cinemas across the country," UIP said in a statement. The film, which stars British actor-director Richard Attenborough as a mad scientist who recreates prehistoric predators was given a PG (parental guidance) rating, with a warning to parents some scenes may be disturbing to children. The previous top grossing film in Britain was Ghost, E.T. The Extra Terrestrial, Crocodile Dundee, Robin Hood — Prince Of Thieves and Terminator 2.

Parliament suspends Yeltsin privatisation decree

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russia's conservative parliament Friday voted to block a move by President Boris Yeltsin to speed up the government's privatisation programme.

Deputies, resuming the offensive against the reformist Russian leader, voted by 140, with 15 against, to suspend his decree last month to accelerate a programme of wide-scale sell-off of state industry.

The expected vote by the parliament, marking a further stage in renewed confrontation between the Kremlin leader and the legislature, means the decree will now go to the Constitutional Court for a ruling on its validity. The Supreme Soviet, chaired by Mr. Yeltsin's political arch-

rival Ruslan Khasbulatov, ignored Privatisation Minister Anatoly Chubais who denounced parliament's move.

Before the vote was taken, he told the session that the suspension resolution was "economically absurd, juridically unfounded, politically flawed and devoid of common sense."

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin earlier called at a government meeting for acceleration of the privatisation drive and implementation of Mr. Yeltsin's decrees.

Conservative Deputy Bronislav Babayev, presenting the suspension resolution, said: "The government is conducting privatisation as set by presidential decrees and is ignoring the decisions of

the Supreme Soviet."

Mr. Yeltsin signed a decree last May to promote and accelerate the privatisation programme which represents the cornerstone of reforms to switch Russia from a centralised to a market economy.

Parliament replied by suspending the effect of the decree and sending it to the constitutional court for a decision.

Mr. Yeltsin, after curtailing his holiday to deal with a series of parliamentary challenges to government reforms, bounced back on July 26 with a similar decree to set the privatisation programme back on track.

Friday's resolution was aimed at this second decree.

Mr. Chubais later hinted to reporters that Mr. Yeltsin had anticipated parliament's action. "Our counter-measures are ready. They are in my briefcase," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, President Yeltsin confirmed Friday that Yuri Kalmykov will be the new justice minister, a presidential spokesman told AFP.

Mr. Kalmykov, 58, replaces Nikolai Fyodorov who resigned last March in protest at Mr. Yeltsin's setting up of a regime of special powers.

He had been running the Justice Ministry on an interim basis since April and was formerly head of the parliamentary committee charged with drawing up laws.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indonesians seek compensation from Japan

JAKARTA (AFP) — Some 12,000 Indonesians who say they were used as sex slaves, forced labour or army conscripts by the Japanese during World War II are banding together to seek compensation from Tokyo, lawyers said here Friday. The majority are former forced labour conscripts or "romushas" as they are known here who have registered at offices of the Indonesian Legal Institute (LBI) in several major cities since April, lawyers said. Meanwhile a Japanese professor has offered to help Malaysian women forced to be sex slaves for Japanese soldiers pursue their claims in court, the Star newspaper reported Friday in Kuala Lumpur. Japan's government formally apologised Wednesday to tens of thousands of women forced to serve as sex slaves before and during the war. Nagahara Michiko, deputy dean of Waseda University in Tokyo and a member of a Japanese human rights group, told the Star that at least 500 women from Korea, China, Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines had come forward to claim compensation since last year.

Female U.S. Air Force secretary approved

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate approved President Bill Clinton's nomination of Sheila Widnall as secretary of the air force, making her the first woman to head a branch of the U.S. Armed Services. The 55-year-old aeronautical engineer and associate provost at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was confirmed by voice vote Thursday. Ms. Widnall, is President Clinton's second service secretary, joining Navy Secretary John Dalton. The administration, which has been faulted for its slow pace in filling top civilian jobs at the Pentagon, still has not nominated an army secretary. Ms. Widnall, a graduate and former professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), has served on advisory committees to the Military Air Force Command and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Georgian government resigns

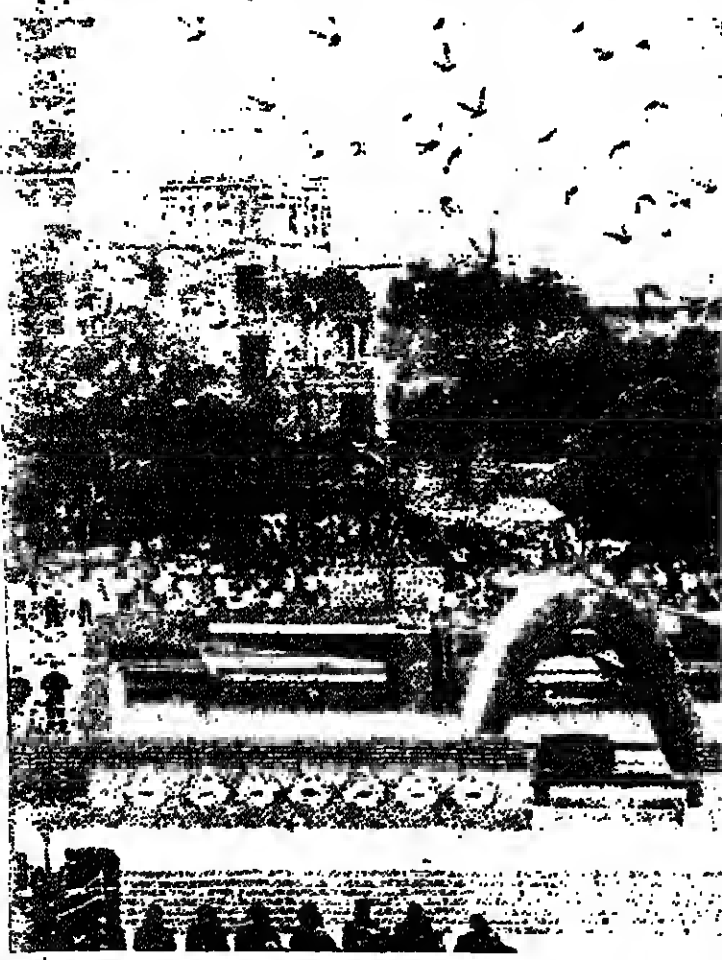
MOSCOW (AFP) — The Georgian government led by Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua resigned Friday, ITAR-TASS News Agency said. The announcement came a day after Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze warned that emergency rule may have to be introduced in the country to prevent the outbreak of civil war. The government was formed last November. Mr. Shevardnadze's warning Thursday came as the government refused pressure from the parliament to make corrections to an austere draft budget, fueling a standoff that ITAR-TASS described as "unprecedented." In a dispatch Thursday, the news agency said the government's refusal to give in to parliament's demands to modify the draft budget, already rejected twice by the legislature, was creating "deadlock, anarchy and chaos" in Georgia.

Angola reports more raids on rebels

LUANDA (R) — Angola said Friday the air force knocked out several air defence positions of UNITA rebels in further bombing raids in the country's central highlands. "All of UNITA's anti-air reaction against the Angolan Air Forces were promptly destroyed," armed forces spokesman-Brigadier Jose Manuel "Jota" said of Thursday's air raids. He told the Angolan News Agency (ANGOP) that UNITA bases in Huambo and Bie provinces near the towns of Bailundo, Catimungo, Gove, Andulo and Chingura were targeted in the raids. On Tuesday and Wednesday the government carried out more than 60 air strikes on UNITA positions in the central highlands, particularly focussing on the rebel headquarters in the provincial capital Huambo. Prime Minister Marcelino Moco said in a statement Thursday distributed by state-run media that the bombings would continue. "UNITA has challenged the legitimacy of the democratically elected government. There is no other solution," he said.

Heathrow fire delays flights

LONDON (AP) — A smoky storehouse fire at Heathrow Airport caused flight delays and forced the evacuation of hundreds of people from one terminal. Flight check-in was suspended at Terminal 3 and travellers were kept out of the building for nearly an hour as firemen dealt with the blaze. Three departing flights were delayed for about 45 minutes, according to an airport spokeswoman.



Doves flutter over the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima Friday during the memorial service for the atomic bomb victims of World War II

Hiroshima urges nuclear weapons ban by 2000

HIROSHIMA (R) — The mayor of Hiroshima, which 48 years ago became the first city to suffer a nuclear attack, called Friday for a global ban on weapons of mass destruction by the end of the century.

"The nuclear powers... should set a deadline, no later than the year 2000, for a total abolition of all nuclear weapons," Takashi Hiraoka said at a memorial service near the epicentre of the attack which killed more than 140,000 people.

Some 45,000 people gathered in sweltering weather at Peace Memorial Park in the western Japanese city for the annual observance.

The service began with a moment of silent prayer at 8:15 a.m., the exact time a U.S. B-29 dropped the atomic bomb which levelled Hiroshima in 1945.

Three days later a second nuclear device annihilated the southwestern city of Nagasaki, killing 70,000 people.

Against the sky stood the twisted iron of the atomic bomb dome, formerly the Hiroshima Industrial Hall — a solitary reminder of what stood in the city centre before the nuclear blast. Mr. Hiraoka appealed to the

world to never repeat the nuclear tragedy. Japan is the only nation to have sustained a nuclear attack.

"We strongly appeal to the conscience of the world that the development and possession of nuclear weapons is a sin against humanity," Mr. Hiraoka said.

Near the podium sat a group of women clad in traditional Korean dress, believed to be relatives of Korean labourers forced to work in Hiroshima during World War II only to become victims of the bomb.

The mayor hailed a decision made by France, Russia and the United States earlier this year to continue their moratorium on nuclear testing but noted that many weapons existed to pose a threat to mankind.

His remarks came after Japan's controversial shipment of plutonium from France earlier this year, which prompted objections from countries on the freighter's route.

Anti-nuclear activists have questioned Japan's adherence to its nuclear policy, which bans the use, storage and development of such weapons of mass destruction.



Japanese political crisis ends; Hosokawa elected PM

Combined agency dispatches

TOKYO — Morihiro Hosokawa, the descendant of a feudal warlord, was elected Japan's new prime minister Friday, bringing to power a coalition government that has vowed to clean up rampant political corruption.

The vote followed a day of delays and squabbling between the coalition that backs Mr. Hosokawa and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), toppled from power after nearly four decades.

Of the 503 votes cast in the 511-seat chamber, 262 were for Mr. Hosokawa and 224 for Yohsei Kono, head of the LDP. The remaining 17 went to other candidates.

When the tally was announced, the chamber burst into applause. Mr. Hosokawa, smiling slightly, stood and bowed.

Mr. Hosokawa's formal selection as prime minister caps a stunning 15-month rise to head of government from virtual obscurity as founder of a small opposition group, the Japan New Party.

The 55-year-old aristocrat replaces Kiichi Miyazawa, who lost a vote of no-confidence in June and was forced to call the July 18 election that deprived his party of a majority in the lower house. Mr. Miyazawa's cabinet resigned Thursday to make way for the new government.

Mr. Hosokawa and his coalition have promised to revamp the electoral system and enact stricter political funding laws to discourage corruption. They have said they will continue the old government's basic foreign and economic policies, although they favour deregulation and a transfer of powers to local regions.

But Mr. Hosokawa quickly discovered the difficulties of leading a multiparty coalition that controls only a slim majority and faces a strong LDP opposition.

The Liberal Democrats, who remain the largest single party, had delayed the vote on prime minister to baffle over who would take the largely ceremonial post of speaker of the lower house.

In the end, the coalition's choice, Takako Doi, was approved. The former Socialist chairwoman becomes the first woman to preside over a Japanese house of parliament. The post is mainly honorary but highly visible.

The squabbles disappointed many Japanese hoping for an improvement over the parliamentary inaction of recent years, when lawmakers seemed to spend more time bickering over corruption scandals than debating legislation.

"This is just like a fistfight among kids, it's pathetic," said political commentator Kenzo Uchida. "Now that we've got a new parliament, this is a great chance for change that shouldn't be wasted."

Many commentators faulted the Liberal Democrats, saying they had put "face" ahead of the nation's political welfare. But the crisis also shook confidence in the coalition — a broad alliance of parties ranging from left to right on the political spectrum.

"Hosokawa has to manage a glass menagerie, which even a small jolt could smash," said the national newspaper Mainichi.

Like many other coalition lawmakers, Mr. Hosokawa is a former LDP member. He served 12 years in the less powerful upper house of parliament and as governor of Kumamoto prefecture from 1983 to 1991.

The LDP has 228 seats. The biggest party in the seven-party coalition, the Socialists, has 77 seats. The LDP lost its majority in the July 18 election.

The new prime minister was expected to meet over the weekend with other leaders to discuss a new cabinet, which may be announced Monday.

But Mr. Hosokawa was expected to appoint Masayoshi Takemura, leader of the small Financier Party, as chief cabinet secretary late Friday.

Ms. Doi, a former chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), ordered a second vote to choose the prime minister after the first vote was declared invalid

after some deputies failed to cast a ballot.

The lower-house vote came almost five hours after parliament resumed sitting and followed a rare pre-emptive vote by the upper house, which had no relevance on the final outcome but also resulted in a majority for Mr. Hosokawa.

In the crucial lower-house vote, Mr. Kono received 224 votes while Japan Communist Party leader Tetsuzo Furuwa received 155. SDP chairman Sadao Yamahana, expected to take up a ministerial post in the new cabinet, received two votes even though he was not an official candidate.

Both houses of parliament were being convened Friday for the first time since Mr. Miyazawa dissolved the lower house in June.

The coalition decided last week to nominate Mr. Hosokawa. His failure to be elected Thursday night as expected marked the first time that Japan went to bed without a new prime minister since 1979 when turmoil in the LDP forced a 10-day delay in choosing a successor to Masayoshi Ohira.

The lower house resumed sitting after an agreement between the LDP and the coalition to resolve differences over the selection of the new lower house speaker and various procedural matters.

The LDP had earlier rejected the choice of Ms. Doi, arguing that the post traditionally goes to the party with the most seats in the lower house which is still the LDP despite the loss of its majority.

Following the compromise, Ms. Doi was elected by 264 votes to 222, defeating LDP candidate Satsuki Okuno. The lower house then voted to extend the current session of parliament for 10 days, instead of 30 demanded by the LDP.

Mr. Hosokawa and the new cabinet are likely to be sworn in after Emperor Akihito's return Monday from the funeral of Belgium's King Baudouin.



His Majesty King Hussein and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher address a press conference Thursday (photo by Aynsley Floyd)

U.S. to look into Jordan's complaints

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Christopher did not rule out confederation between Jordan and the West Bank as a long-term solution, but it was premature to discuss the issue at this point and the parties should concentrate on talks for the interim period.

Jordan has repeatedly said that confederation with a Palestinian entity would not be possible before the Palestinians exercise their complete rights in the occupied territories.

"The concept has been in the air for some time and it was raised with the Palestinians not in a definitive way," Mr. Christopher said.

"But for the time being, we should concentrate on trying to find the best means for interim self-government authority, leaving longer-term solutions until the Palestinians and Israelis come to conclusions on interim steps," he said.

King Hussein told reporters that Jordan continues to seek a just and durable Middle East peace that "will be accepted by future generations and will return to the Palestinians their legitimate rights on their land."

The King denied "reports" that Jordan was planning to cancel its 1988 decision to sever legal and administrative ties with the West Bank as a preliminary step towards confederation with a Palestinian entity.

Responding to a question on the law under which the parliamentary elections will be held in November, the King said: "The final decision has been reached yet and that the opportunity was still there to continue debate on the issue."

King Hussein Wednesday dissolved the 11th Parliament and the government set Nov. 8 as the date for new elections. Uncertainty still engulfs the law under which the elections will be conducted and the Ministry of Interior has reportedly presented the King with a draft legislation that could replace the current law.

The King said the dissolution of parliament was prelude to holding the elections as it is not "possible to enter this period without taking these measures."

"The objective is to consolidate the democratic process and respect (that) all Jordanians are equal in rights and responsibilities as stated by the constitution," the King said.

"We protect the Constitution, and our National Charter is the way to achieve our objectives for a better future," he said.

Mr. Christopher said he congratulates the King and Prime Minister Majali "on the steps that they are taking at the present time towards greater effectiveness of democracy in Jordan."

"I wish him well in the period between now and elections on Nov. 8," he said.

Lebanon the previous day. Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin also said on Thursday he believed the shuttle between Syria and Israel "almost guarantees" peace between the two countries.

Mr. Christopher said Washington wanted to play an active role in helping parties to the peace process make progress, spokesman Kuriyeh said.

Mr. Assad again assured him of Syria's "firm desire to cooperate in making the peace process succeed," the spokesman added.

The spokesman said the talks covered efforts to "salvage the peace process from its impasse (and) push it forward towards its goal of a just and comprehensive peace."

Mr. Christopher told reporters in Israel before heading for Syria that his mission had failed to achieve a breakthrough in the stalled peace talks, but he had managed to salvage the process.

He said renewed violence in South Lebanon had not interfered with the talks in Damascus. "There was some progress and

many difficulties," Mr. Christopher added. He declined to discuss any substantive issues in the peace process.

Mr. Sharaa told the news conference: "They were good talks, frank and open. There are many questions involved because the Arab-Israeli conflict is a thorny issue."

Diplomats said Syria and Israel appeared to be formulating ideas on an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Mr. Christopher appeared to be throwing his weight behind achieving some progress on that aspect of the negotiations.

The presidential spokesman said Mr. Christopher said Washington also wanted to "play an active role helping parties to the peace process to move forward on all tracks."

Mr. Sharaa said Mr. Christopher's two rounds of talks with Mr. Assad "covered the progress, if any, on all tracks because we are seeking a comprehensive settlement and that this should address all the tracks."

Lebanese government does not intend to disarm Hizbollah or prevent its resistance activities directed against Israel's occupation zone. Ever since Israel unilaterally ceased fire, Prime Minister Hariri has stated repeatedly and firmly that his army would not "interfere with Hizbollah" and other resistance groups whose attacks on Israel's occupation zone he considered "legitimate" as long as Israel continues to illegally occupy Lebanese territory in violation of Security Council Resolution 425, which calls upon the Jewish state to "withdraw forthwith" from all Lebanese territory.

Positive proof that Mr. Hariri means what he says is the fact that the Lebanese resistance has made five attacks on Israel's occupation zone since the ceasefire was called by Israel last Saturday. Three of these attacks were the usual mortar and weapons fire but two, on Thursday, involved the firing of Katyushas into the zone, some from the Iqlim Al Tofah region above the UNIFIL area of operations where the Lebanese army was deployed.

The present task of the Lebanese army is to compel Hizbollah and its allies to comply with the February 1992 "Sidon agreement" concluded by the pro-Iranian militia, the Lebanese authorities and the Syrians. According to this agreement, Hizbollah would be free to conduct resistance activity in Israel's occupation

Crown Prince stresses need to modernise judiciary

(Continued from page 1)

views on judicial issues with the aim of modernising and updating the judiciary to achieve its objectives represented in serving the society and the country.

Prince Hassan and the judges also discussed issues related to activities and updating the role of inspection services. Several judges proposed setting up a judicial inspection committee and creating a nucleus for judicial planning.

They also discussed with the Crown Prince the need to prepare a new strategy for preparing and training judges, saying this strategy should account for the needs of the Jordanian society and its relations with other states.

Also under discussion was the significance of benefiting from judicial periodicals and publications and exploiting other countries' experience in the judiciary, with the judges highlighting the need to develop the judicial library to serve the judicial development process.

Mr. Wazani also delivered an address at the ceremony and reviewed the development and objectives of the institute since it was established in 1989.

He said the idea to establish the institute was propounded by the Crown Prince, who had the conviction that it was a necessity for the judiciary.

Prince Hassan, he said, had supplied the institute with the bylaws and systems of judicial institutes in several Arab and foreign countries and was always following up the issue until the institute came into existence in 1989.

He added that when theory came into practice, some loopholes had emerged and thus the Ministry of Justice was working on amending some of the provisions of the institute's bylaws.

Another address was delivered by Director General of the Institute Mifflie Al Qudahi, who underscored the importance of the independence of the judiciary.

Dr. Qudahi stressed the role of the institute in training judges and said judges should always be able to shoulder responsibilities by being well-trained and armed with knowledge.

Hizbollah steps up attacks

(Continued from page 1)

jayoun.

The government has decided to deploy the Lebanese army in areas policed by the U.N. Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which did not have a mandate to interfere with guerrilla movement in the area.

The government move aims at heading off another Israeli assault by curbing guerrilla activities in these villages.

New York prosecutor says 'plot' included kidnappings

NEW YORK (AP) — A prosecutor says the suspects in an alleged plot to blow up New York City landmarks also talked of killing, kidnapping and hostage taking, indicating the plot might have been part of a larger conspiracy.

In a letter Thursday, Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew C. McCarthy also sought to assure U.S. District Judge Michael B. Mukasey that prosecutors were behaving ethically.

The judge, for his part, has sought to suppress persistent leaks in the case, including that an informant, Emad Salem, taped his conversation with the government agents for whom he was working.

At a hearing Thursday with all of the defendants present, Mr. Mukasey ordered the government to obtain affidavits from all law enforcement supervisors in the case detailing their contacts with the media. He also ordered the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to find the leaks.

Suggesting that defence lawyers were also behind some of the leaks, Mr. Mukasey ordered all parties not to disclose publicly any more evidence prior to the trial, which is still months away.

Mr. McCarthy defended the ethics of prosecutors, noting that they had preserved Mr. Salem's tapes, which they did not learn of until after the undercover investigation was completed.

But the leaks apparently continued as New York Newsday newspaper, citing sources familiar with the transcripts, reported Friday that Mr. Salem suggested to the alleged ringleader of the plot that they wear yarmulkes so that Jews would be blamed for the attacks.

The existence of the tapes were first reported this week by Newsday newspaper. The disclosure caused a sensation among defence attorneys, who said the tapes would prove that their clients were entrapped by Mr. Salem.

In his letter to Mr. Mukasey, Mr. McCarthy provided the first official acknowledgement of the tapes.

He said Mr. Salem would likely testify at the trial and that he expected the defendants to argue they "were really not otherwise disposed to plan bombings, murders, kidnapping, hostage taking and the myriad other terrorist activities they spoke about in this case."

Tyson rape conviction upheld

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson's effort to overturn his rape conviction was rejected Friday by a state appeals court.

The Indiana court of appeals panel upheld the conviction in a 2-1 decision that rejected several defence arguments.

On a key issue, the judges ruled the trial court did not abuse its discretion in barring the testimony of three defence witnesses who would have contradicted Desiree Washington, the beauty contestant who brought the rape complaint against Mr. Tyson in 1991.

In the 72-page decision, the majority also ruled the court properly excluded evidence about Ms. Washington's sexual past and evidence which the defence claimed would show Ms. Washington had a "powerful and secret motive" to lie that she had been raped.

The evidence, never disclosed, involved incidents between Ms. Washington and her parents. Mr. Tyson's lawyers claimed. But the defence lawyers failed to question her parents on the issue and so waived the right to appeal it, the appeals court ruled.

Greg Garrison, who led the prosecution, had no immediate comment and appeals attorney Alan Dershowitz was not immediately available.

Mr. Tyson, now 27, was convicted in February 1992 of attacking Ms. Washington the previous July in his hotel room. He was sentenced to six years in prison, followed by four years' probation. Marion Superior Court Judge Patricia J. Gifford ordered Mr. Tyson held during his appeal and he is serving his sentence at the Indiana youth centre.

Mr. Tyson must serve at least three years of his six-year term under an Indiana law that subtracts one day for each day of good behaviour. Prison officials say Mr. Tyson lost 30 days of credit for threatening a guard.

Clarence Trigg, the superintendent at the prison, said Mr. Tyson found out about the decision early Friday in a telephone call from his attorney. Mr. Tyson was back on the job as a dormitory maintenance worker, Mr. Trigg said, adding, "It's a regular work day."

Mr. Tyson testified he had openly solicited sex with Ms. Washington, the Rhode Island contestant in the Miss Black America pageant, and other contestants during rehearsals. He said he had made his intentions clear to the women and Ms. Washington, then 15, had willingly engaged in sex.

Israel uses false reports to mislead opinion on 'success' of Lebanon assault

By Michael Jansen
Special to the Jordan Times

PHOTOGRAPHS of the Lebanese army moving southwards and reports from Israel that Lebanese troops are deploying in the main target area of last week's Israeli bombardment are totally false and intended to mislead.

Israel has used these false reports to mislead its own and world public opinion into believing that its week-long bombing campaign against South Lebanon had been a success since it had forced the Lebanese army to deploy immediately in the target area and curb militias which were attacking Israel. This immediate compliance with Israel's demands is then used to justify Israel's brutal bombardment of unprotected civilians in South Lebanon and the displacement and suffering Israel inflicted on these people.

The reports were false because the Lebanese army has not yet begun to deploy in the United Nations area of operations which lies between Israel's occupation zone along the frontier and the Litani River. Commandant Mark O'Brien of the Irish battalion, which operates in the most exposed central sector of the U.N. area, told this correspondent: "No Lebanese forces have arrived here."

And they are not expected for several days, perhaps a week or more, because arrangements for the deployment of the Lebanese army are

still being negotiated between the commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the Lebanese authorities. Captain Michael Lindvall, the acting UNIFIL spokesman, said that Secretary General Boutros Ghali and Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri had agreed in a phone conversation on Sunday (Aug. 1) that the Lebanese army would be deployed in the UNIFIL area.

The captain said that this agreement amounted to a "green light" for deployment of the army which UNIFIL would assist because "it is part of its mandate" to restore Lebanese control within the U.N. zone of operations.

The Lebanese army moved into the uppermost western corner of the UNIFIL zone, into the sector under Ghanian troops east of Tyre, in early 1991 and then moved a kilometre eastwards in October 1992 in implementation of the Taif accord. But the Lebanese army did not continue its deployment as planned because its installations were shelled twice by Israel in order to block this deployment. Thus it is ironic that Israel's casus belli for its latest assault was the absence of the Lebanese army in the area targeted by Israeli guns and aircraft.

Reports that the army had moved "into the south" in order to disarm the Hizbollah militia and force it out of the sensitive border region were misleading because the

Lebanese government does not intend to disarm Hizbollah or prevent its resistance activities directed against Israel's occupation zone. Ever since Israel unilaterally ceased fire, Prime Minister Hariri has stated repeatedly and firmly that his army would not "interfere with Hizbollah" and other resistance groups whose attacks on Israel's occupation zone he considered "legitimate" as long as Israel continues to illegally occupy Lebanese territory in violation of Security Council Resolution 425, which calls upon the Jewish state to "withdraw forthwith" from all Lebanese territory.

Positive proof that Mr. Hariri means what he says is the fact that the Lebanese resistance has made five attacks on Israel's occupation zone since the ceasefire was called by Israel last Saturday. Three of these attacks were the usual mortar and weapons fire but two, on Thursday, involved the firing of Katyushas into the zone, some from the Iqlim Al Tofah region above the UNIFIL area of operations where the Lebanese army was deployed.

The latest round was precipitated not by Hizbollah rocket attacks on northern Israel but by the killing in the first two weeks of July of seven Israeli soldiers within the occupation zone by Hizbollah and its Palestinian allies. Hizbollah did not send its rockets into northern Israel until the Israelis began their bombardment of South Lebanon. Hizbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah said this week that his militiamen would once again respond with Katyusha rockets on northern Israel if the Israelis bombed the villages of South Lebanon in retaliation for Hizbollah attacks against Israeli forces within the occupation zone.

If the Lebanese army does not curb Hizbollah attacks into the occupation zone and Israel responds to such attacks by hitting South Lebanon (which it did on Thursday after Katyushas were fired into the occupation zone) and Hizbollah replies by launching Katyushas into Galilee, the situation in South Lebanon could instantaneously revert to where it was before Israel launched "operation accountability."

Re: An Arab Headdress; Richard Cohen; 27 July 1993

Following is a letter to the editor of the Washington Post from His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. The letter was published Aug. 4 in response to an article by Richard Cohen.

Dear Sir,

IT WAS heartening to read Richard Cohen's piece on stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims. However, the fact that it was unusually commendable is disturbing in itself. For his piece was nothing more than an appeal for one-fifth of the world's population to be accorded basic respect, tolerance and understanding.

Mr. Cohen has identified a simple yet distressing reality: While comparable stereotyping of other racial or religious groups is now unthinkable, images of Arab or Muslim terrorists, nihilists and religious fanatics (seemingly the only categories available) are propagated with impunity. The reality is that the Islamic and Arab worlds are as diverse and heterogeneous as any other religion or race.

But there exists a skewed perception of Islam as a uniquely monolithic creed of violence, intolerance and oppression. This perception, which ironically originated at the time of Crusaders, is nothing less than crass racism, and its ultimate effect may be to alienate the world's 1 billion Muslims.

At a time when the global community is becoming increasingly interdependent, effective cultural communication, mutual tolerance and understanding based on a sound grasp of traditions are of the utmost importance. Reductive stereotypes are insulting and ill-informed; in an ever-shrinking world, they are also dangerous. I am grateful to Mr. Cohen for bringing these issues to the attention of the American public and for exposing a number of the more offensive generalisations faced by Arabs and Muslims.

Al Hassan Ben Talal
Crown Prince of
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

COLUMN

Buckingham Palace opens its doors in fund-raising drive

LONDON (R) — Buckingham Palace put its priceless treasures on display for the first time Friday as Queen Elizabeth opened her London home in a fund-raising drive for royal renovations. Courtiers opened the gilded gates of the central London palace for a season of tours allowing ordinary British subjects and tourists from overseas to sneak a look inside the monarchy's sumptuous interior. First inside the palace gates and up the stairs to the opulent red-carpeted state rooms were the world's media, invited for a preview Friday ahead of Saturday morning's official opening to the fee-paying public. Palace aides were inundated with requests for preview tickets and 600 reporters were due to tour the palace at hourly intervals Friday morning in what courtiers hoped will be a trouble-free start to the enterprise. The 600-room palace, symbol and base of the ancient British monarchy, is being turned into a tourist attraction to raise money towards the estimated £40 million (\$60 million) cost of repairing fire damage at the queen's Windsor Castle.

New magazine to air Prince Charles' views

LONDON (R) — Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, is supporting a new magazine which will help air his personal views on architectural eyesores and environmental issues, the publication's editor said. Dan Cruickshank said Prince Charles would probably write some articles for it, dealing mostly with architecture, a pet topic of the prince whose sometimes outspoken opinions have brought him into conflict with Britain's architectural establishment. The as yet untitled magazine, to be published by the Prince of Wales' Institute of Architecture, will also run articles on all the things he feels passionate about, including arts and crafts, landscape gardens and green issues such as energy conservation. The first issue will come out next year. "It will study many of the issues and concerns that have been raised by the Prince of Wales during the last 10 years and seek to give a voice to the public in the great debate about the world we are creating," the magazine's mission statement said. Mr. Cruickshank stressed it would not be a mouthpiece for the prince's views but would provide a forum for discussion of them.

Suicide doctor challenges authorities

DETROIT, Michigan (AFP) — Jack Kevorkian threw down a gauntlet to the courts Thursday by admitting he helped a man commit suicide Wednesday. He told the press that he gave Thomas Hyde, who was terminally ill, the mask, carbon monoxide and other equipment needed to commit suicide. Dr. Kevorkian said he was responding to Michigan prosecutor John O'Hair's call, published in the Detroit News, to "say the magic words that he physically assisted in the suicide and he provided the equipment." Mr. O'Hair said a new Michigan law, drafted in response to Dr. Kevorkian's promotion of assisted suicide, would be broken if a person knew another intended to commit suicide and provided the means to do so. Dr. Kevorkian Thursday spelled out his role in Wednesday's suicide, saying: "I put the mask over Mr. Hyde's face because he could not move." Prosecutor O'Hair has indicated what he needs: I believe we have supplied sufficient evidence and let a judge and jury end this charade once and for all," said Dr. Kevorkian's lawyer, Geoffrey Fieger. "I do not long for a showdown, but this has to be ended."

Indian green activists call off mass suicide

KAVADIA, India (AFP) — Indian green activists cancelled their planned mass suicide at the last minute Friday after the government accepted demands for a review of the controversial Narmada Dam project. Girish Patel, a spokesman for the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA, Save Narmada Movement), told reporters at the dam site here that the planned "self-sacrifice" by nine activists was off. Medha Patkar, 37, the leader of the NBA's seven-year-old fight against the dam threatening to displace more than 200,000 people, had announced she would drown in the waters of the dam Friday with eight of her followers.